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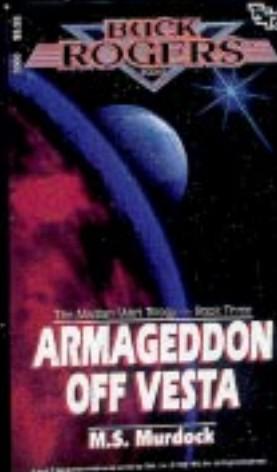
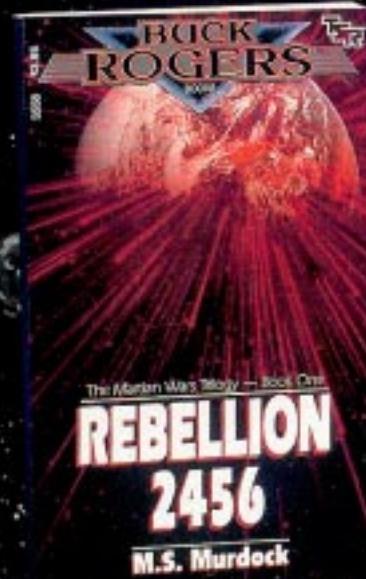
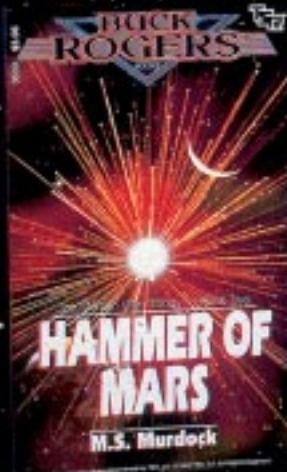
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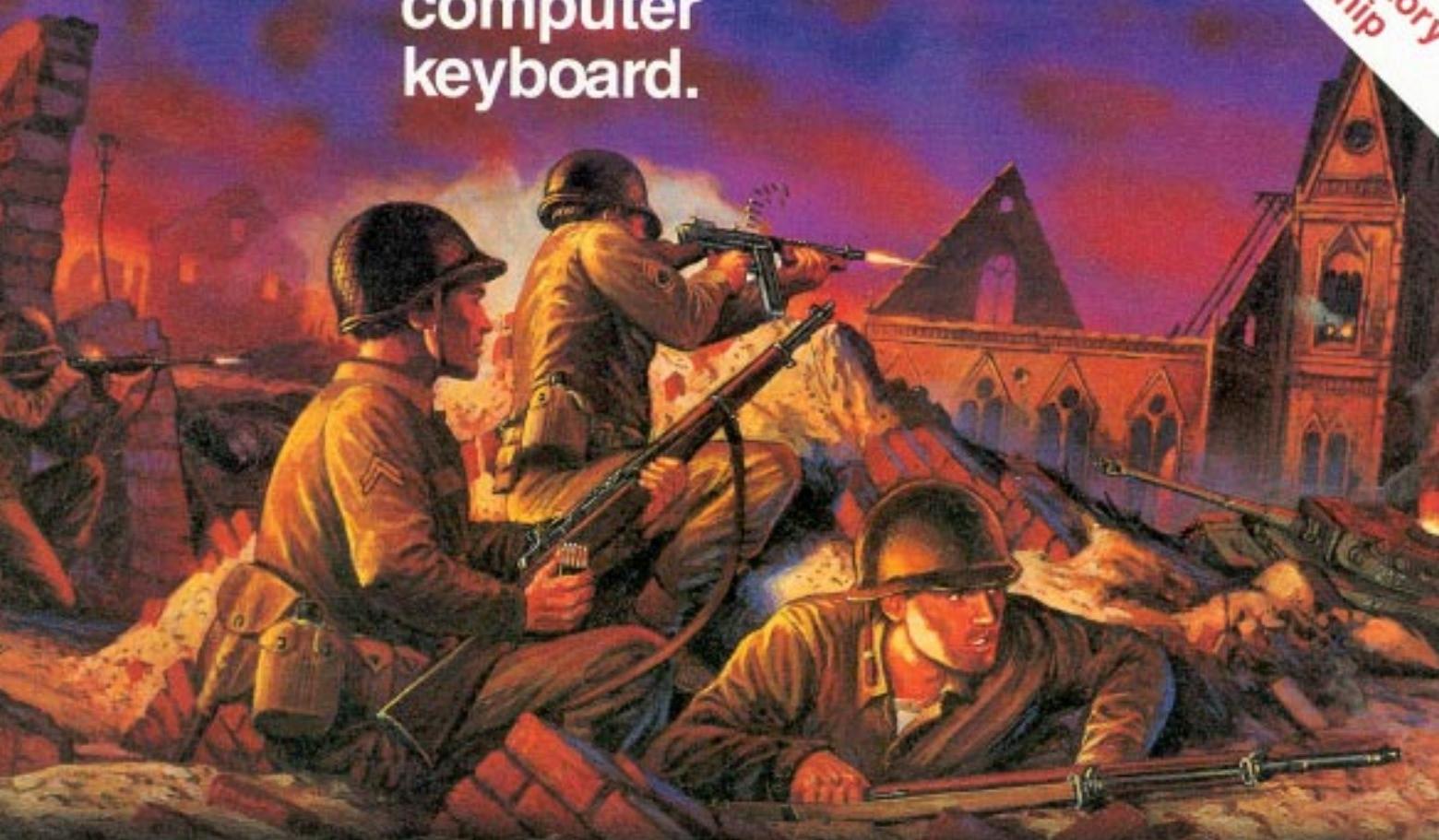
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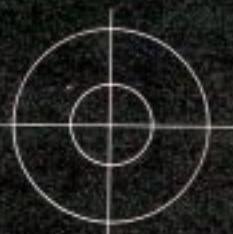
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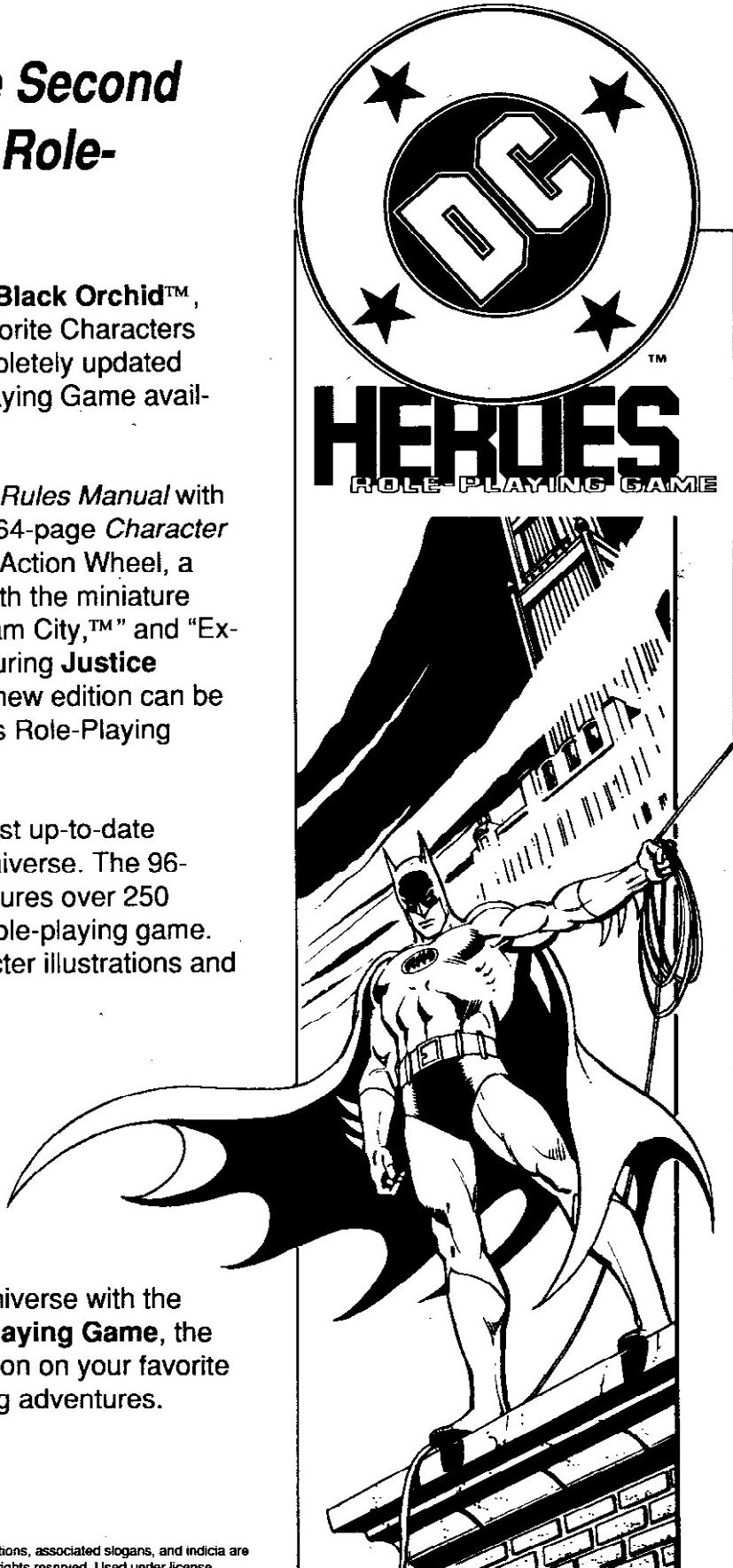
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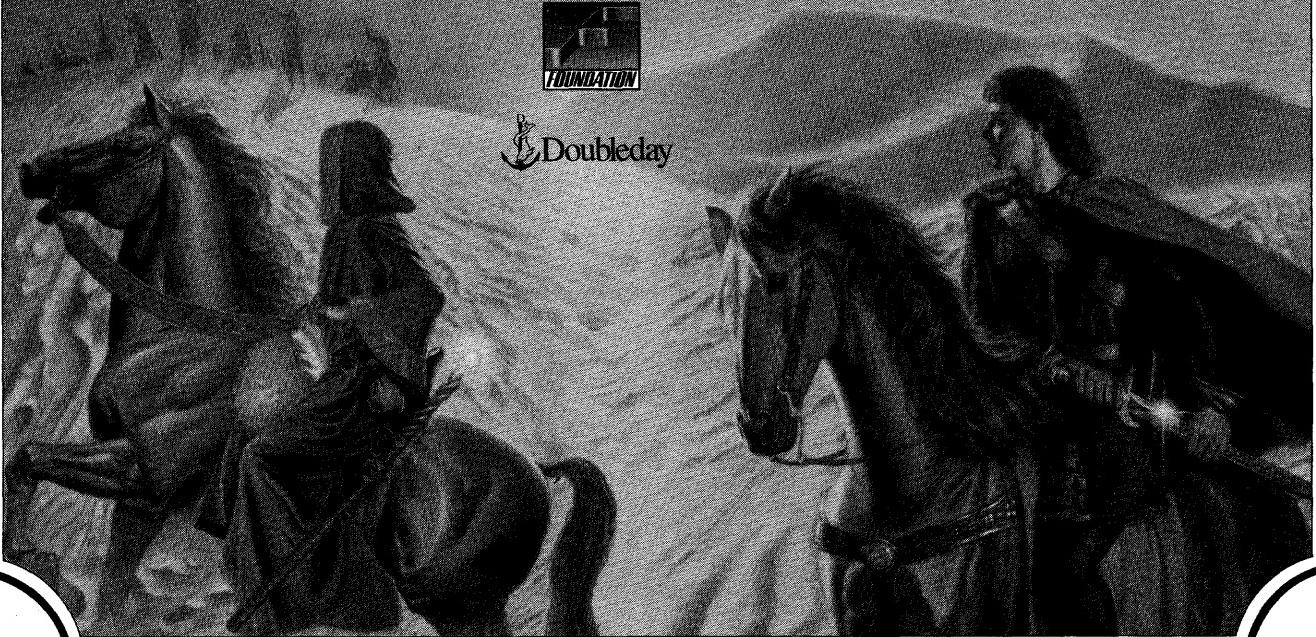
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# RAYMOND E. FEIST PRINCE OF THE BLOOD



Doubleday



# Dragon®

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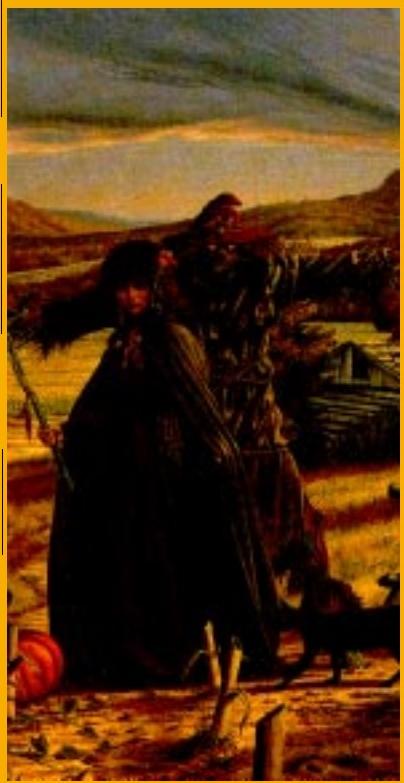
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## COVER

This month's cover is a particularly American blend of horror and fantasy by Larry Elmore. Somewhere in the hills of western Kentucky, a witch and her familiar check up on a scarecrow that guards her domain. What the scarecrow does when it finds an intruder is left to your imagination. The arrowhead in the picture (good luck finding it!) is dedicated to the times when Larry and his father searched for them on their farm.

# LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

## The vampire revamped

Dear Dragon:

The AD&D® 2nd Edition game is a great system, but I was shocked when I recently purchased the *Monstrous Compendium*, Volume One. In the two-page entry for the vampire, the second page merely repeats the text of the first. The illustration is different, but rather than going into the habitat and ecology of the vampire, the information on page one is repeated word for word.

Is this error unique to my copy or is it common to all? If the latter, how does TSR, Inc. plan to rectify the situation? Perhaps a special insert in DRAGON Magazine is in order.

Paul Fraser  
Windsor, Nova Scotia

*The error was common to all copies of the first run of that product—and we have the corrected text in this issue of the magazine, appropriately enough in time for Halloween.*

## SSI & etc.

Dear Dragon:

I'm just writing in to tell you guys what a great job you're doing. But now I have a few questions and comments.

1. How about an article on cantrips for *Oriental Adventures*?

2. I LOVED the cover artwork on issue #146. It was superb!

3. Where do I send clues for "Clue corner"?

4. I'm really going to miss SnarfQuest. Are there any plans for a new regular series?

5. I own *Pool of Radiance*, and I just love it. Does TSR or SSI have any plans for an Oriental [computer-game] setting?

Jason Dunn  
Calgary, Alberta

1. Any article on cantrips should fit the AD&D 2nd Edition game version of the spell cantrip. The idea sounds okay, though we would be choosy about the article itself.

2. Thank you. We'll let Keith Parkinson know that you liked his work.

3. Send your computer-game clues for "The Role of Computers" to: Hartley and Patricia

Lesser, 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583, U.S.A.

4. We are still working on plans for a new graphic story but have nothing definite yet.

5. At the moment, no Oriental Adventures computer game is in the works. However, you might be interested to know that upcoming AD&D computer games from SSI, Inc. include the following (these are working titles only):

Dungeon Masters Assistant, Volume II, for creating PCs and NPCs, with magical items;

Dragons of Flame, an action-arcade sequel to Heroes of the Lance, set in the DRAGONLANCE® saga at Pax Tharkas;

War of the Lance, a strategic fantasy war game about the DRAGONLANCE saga;

DRAGONLANCE FRP, which uses the same game system as Pool of Radiance and Azure Bonds, and which allows a party to explore Krynn in the time following the DRAGONLANCE Legends trilogy;

Dragonflight, a dragon-riding flight simulator for the DRAGONLANCE saga; and

Dungeone Bash, a sequel to Azure Bonds in a dungeon environment.

There are several Oriental-style computer games on the market, however; just consult "The Role of Computers" column for details.

## Good hit, bad miss

Dear Dragon:

A couple of comments from down-under which might be of interest to your readers:

1. In reply to Robert Collins ("Letters," issue #142), the article "Good Hits & Bad Misses" [which contained critical-hit tables for the AD&D game] has already appeared in a Best of DRAGON Magazine anthology. It is on page 65 of volume V.

2. I have just purchased the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide*. It struck me that you could publish corrections for these books in a ring-binder, hole-punched format suitable for insertion in the *Monstrous Compendium* binder. This would keep all such corrections close at hand during play and save time in leafing through DRAGON Magazine for that missing info.

Tony R. Davison  
Sunnybank, Queensland, Australia

1. [Groan.] I had completely forgotten about the anthologized version of "Good Hits & Bad Misses" when I wrote my reply to Robert Collins. The error is all the worse since I worked on that particular anthology.

2. We think it would be better to simply run the errata on the 2nd Edition materials in the "Sage Advice" column (as we have done in issues #148 and #149). Players may photocopy the errata and keep the material with their game books; we don't object to photocopying as long as it is for personal use only and not for sale.

## The big one

On August 9th, I packed myself into my little blue Toyota and drove to Milwaukee for the 1989 GEN CON® Game Fair with all the enthusiasm I would have for going to the dentist, assuming my dentist were going to keep me in his chair for five days and perform a root canal on me every 20 minutes. (As a TSR employee, I work at the TSR Periodicals booth whenever we have such game fairs). I am pleased to inform you, the readers, that the convention was a tremendous, stunning success, and I even enjoyed myself, much as if my dentist had only forced me to run 128 miles over hot concrete before giving me a clean bill of health and a warning to floss more often.

Setup of the TSR Periodicals booth on Wednesday went well, though our product boxes, which had the words "DRAGON BOOTH" written on them in letters 4" high, were understandably dropped off at the cafeteria and at the upstairs auction room. After setup, your editors went out for Chinese food and then went home to await Thursday's dreaded dawn, with the opening of the MECCA Convention Center doors to thousands of game-starved fanatics.

This year's game fair was scheduled on the same weekend as the annual reunion of the 101st Airborne Division ("The Screaming Eagles") and a large rap concert that was well attended by hordes of Milwaukee police officers. By contrast, the convention crowd of over 10,000 gamers and spectators was well behaved, with the exception of author Margaret Weis, who made faces at me whenever she walked by the TSR Periodicals booth. In return, I gave a fan of the DRAGONLANCE® saga a dime to go to the Bantam Books booth and tell Margaret how much he admired her writing (naming books she had never written), but this tactic failed miserably when the fan was so overcome with actually meeting Margaret that he forgot his mission and probably his name and address as well.

Many new and exciting game products appeared at the convention. TSR had lots of AD&D® 2nd Edition, books and supplements, Hero Games had the hardbound 4th-edition CHAMPION™ rules, and R. Talsorian had the Hardwired sourcebook for its CYBER-PUNK game. FASA's cyberpunk-fantasy SHADOWRUN™ game was sold beside

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# FORUM

"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

The Executive Board of Atlanta's ORIGINS™ '90 would like to clarify a few misconceptions concerning our forthcoming convention on June 28-July 1, 1990. This letter is in response to a reader submission in issue #145's "Forum."

Atlanta currently hosts four major conventions each year; while each provides a gaming component, only one expands it to a major focus of the event. ORIGINS'90 is first and foremost a gaming convention, with the quality and diversity of the games and gaming environment offered as its prime concerns.

While the cancellation of several secondary games due to a lack of registration may have been a factor in Mr. Walker's perceptions presented in his letter, this will **not** present a problem at an ORIGINS due to the overall number of attendees alone. As the National Adventure Gaming Exposition in 1990, nearly all of the top tournament gaming associations in the U.S. will join forces with our staff and GMs to provide the finest in role-playing, board, miniatures, and computer gaming competitions.

Nearly half of Mr. Walker's letter focused on the negative images he perceived certain gamers may have presented. This is the furthest from the truth with respect to convention publicity in Atlanta, cited by some as "the heart of the Bible belt." Television, radio, and print media continue to feature Atlanta's conventions in a positive and healthy light in both live and recorded programs and full-page articles.

A final point that Mr. Walker presented concerned factors that the ORIGINS '90 committee took into account when selecting a single, self-contained site for both the entire convention and lodging. The Atlanta Hilton was chosen as our host site. It contains over 100,000 square feet of convention facilities and 1,200 rooms that provide ORIGINS '90 with great versatility. ORIGINS '90 will feature 24-hour tournament and open gaming, as well as continuous availability of food and beverage, a swimming pool and spa, and other hotel facilities from Thursday nonstop till Sunday.

If readers have suggestions concerning game tournaments they would like to see, modules they can provide or run (and we heartily encourage both), or just about anything else, they can write us at: ORIGINS '90, P.O. Box 47969, Atlanta GA 30362.

David Cody  
Tournament Coordinator  
Ed Kramer  
Convention Chairman

With respect to the dragon articles that appeared in DRAGON issue #134, I have some-

thing else to add. While dragons rarely need to be beefed up as much as suggested in "Give Dragons a Fighting Chance," the author is quite correct in saying they are underrated. The problem is not in the physical aspects of the dragon but in the mental.

Dragons are smart, believe it or not. Furthermore, they have lived waaayyy longer than any human, dwarven, or elven party that ever marched up to any dragon cave. The surviving dragons, by trial and error, have learned a *lot* about life in general. They will have a whole network of human spies and informants across the surrounding region (contacted while in *polymorphed* form, probably), who will warn the dragons of the general power and renown of characters launching an attack. If a dragon knows a party is coming, he might be in his cave—and he might not. If he *is* in his cave, he will certainly have all manner of traps and guardians (perhaps unintelligent ones—a few well-placed green slimes can wreak havoc on a party), more than one escape route, and probably some cursed items marked by the dragon's *wizard mark* (so that the dragon doesn't use them accidentally) lying around with the rest of the treasure. Certainly the dragon will not be alone in his lair; there may be a stone golem concealed in a rock as well. *Charmed* bodyguards will protect their "friend" from the "greedy, power-hungry adventurers."

If the dragon is not in his lair, as will probably be the case, he will perhaps *polymorph* into the shape of a henchman and offer to accompany the party on its quest to destroy a dragon. This pseudohenchman will destroy the party's items along the way and will eat other henchmen during the night, appearing astonished in the morning. The pseudohenchman will *charm* characters and plant *suggestions* of devious sorts on the way to the cave. He will suppress a grin as the party comes across the dragon's inner lair (actually a false one; the real one is farther into the mountain), use all the *cursed* items, be attacked by a mound of disguised goldbugs, carry off the gold-covered copper pieces, and wonder where the darn dragon went, anyway. The pseudohenchman then stays a little way behind the party, *polymorphs* back into a dragon, uses a few breath weapons (not fire, of course; that would melt all the party's valuable items), then picks up the party's magical items and treasure and hauls it all back.

Whether the dragon is in its lair or secretly accompanying the party, it will notify its dragon friends (if there are any) in other regions and have a *sending* spell ready to call for aid, just in case. If the party is caught in any of the traps, there is nothing the dragon will like better than breathing down on the group or just waiting until the entire party dies (which won't take very long), then collecting all of the party's possessions.

A letter to "Forum" that appeared a long time ago contained an example of a perfectly misplayed dragon. It showed how a group of 25th-level characters would not consider a dragon that came from the D&D Companion Set a

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Continued on page 44

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Waterdeep is the third novel in the Avatar Trilogy, TSR's newest epic saga based on the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ fantasy setting.



The module Waterdeep is the third of a three-part series of adventures for the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® 2nd Edition role-playing game.

**Both the novel and module are now available at your favorite book store or hobby shop.**

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# SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

Combat and melee in the AD&D® 1st Edition game make up this month's topic, with special advice on fighting hydras. All references to the *Dungeon Masters Guide* and *Players Handbook* in this article are to the 1st Edition versions of those volumes. In all cases, the information in the AD&D 2nd Edition volumes takes precedence where there is a contradiction between those rules and this column.

But first, a special word from the sage, then one from the editor.

**Why haven't you answered my 27 letters, each with 57 questions on my favorite game system? You said you would reply if I sent an SASE with each letter. Why don't you give a seminar at the GEN CON® game fair? If I come to Lake Geneva, can I meet you and ask you questions?**

Although the "Sage Advice" in DRAGON issue #121 said the sage would make personal replies, I receive so many letters that I cannot answer every one. (However, if you **don't** enclose an SASE, I cannot reply at all.) Usually I reply only to letters that have questions I can use in the column, so that all the readers get the benefit of my time. Needless to say, I don't give extended private interviews in Lake Geneva or anywhere else.

If you want to increase your chances of getting a personal reply, do the following:

1. Look through your books for your answers, and be sure to consult the indexes (if the books have them). Often, with a little extra effort, you'll find rules that have eluded you.

2. Keep your letter short. Decide what you really need to know, and stick to the most important questions. As I've stressed before, role-playing games involve choices and decisions; don't be afraid to make some on your own.

3. Include the title of the book **and** the page number that contains the rule you are asking about; this saves me a lot of page flipping.

My work with the RPGA™ Network keeps me busy at almost every game con-

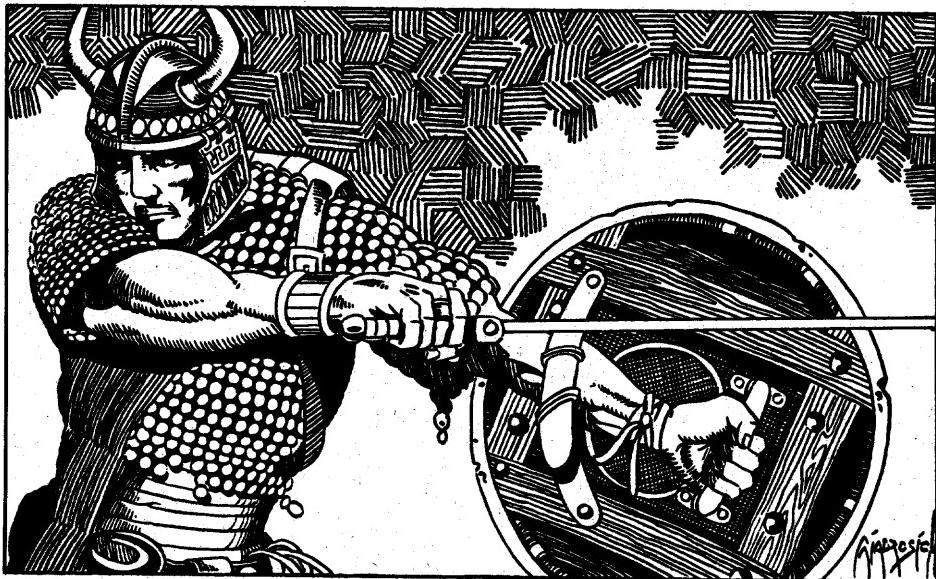


Illustration by Bob Giadrosich

vention I attend, and seminars are not the best place to answer rules questions. I'm not an encyclopedia of game knowledge. I rely on a big library and a large network of personal contacts to find answers, and few people would be entertained by watching me flip through my books and consult my files while I struggle with a tricky question. Still, I do answer some questions at conventions; just keep them short, and don't interrupt me while I'm running a game. Also, some conventions I attend collect written questions for me so that I can use them in the column or work on them during the show and discuss the results with anyone who is interested.

Skip Williams

**Why are you still running questions for the AD&D 1st Edition game now that the AD&D 2nd Edition game is on the market?**

DRAGON Magazine will continue to use material specifically for the AD&D 1st Edition game simply because so many people use that edition. The 2nd Edition has only been out for six months, but the 1st Edition game has been available for over a decade. (Remember, too, that material for one edition can usually be used with the other with ease.) As time goes on, we expect that more players will switch to the 2nd Edition game, and our coverage of that system will increase. We want to offer the most useful material to the largest number of gamers.

Roger E. Moore

**What is the proper way to handle a fight with a hydra? Does the creature's effective hit dice drop as it loses heads? Will damage to the creature's body kill it? How do area-effect spells such as *fireball* effect the heads? How does one determine when a lernaean hydra's regeneration ability is stopped?**

Hydras do pose a few problems, especially when magic is involved. I suggest the following rules for handling combat with a hydra.

A hydra's effective hit dice do not drop as the creature loses heads. With respect to melee, each of a hydra's heads is treated as a separate creature. Each head dies when it reaches zero hit points, and excess damage does not carry over to another head. When all heads are reduced to zero hit points, the creature dies immediately. Hits to a hydra's body will kill it; the body has as many hit points as the total hit points of its starting heads. When the body is reduced to zero hit points, however, the creature continues to fight as long as it has at least one living head. It will then fight for an additional 2-8 rounds or until the body is reduced to -20 hp.

A lernaean hydra's regeneration ability makes it a tougher nut to crack. The individual heads can be slain in the normal manner; however, a fire source must be applied to each slain head or it will regenerate. Burning **hands** is the easiest way to scorch the stumps or sundered heads. A

torch, flask of oil, or *flame tongue* sword will stop a single head's regeneration if applied in time. Any successful hit on the slain head will stop regeneration. A lernaean hydra stays alive as long as it has one living or regenerating head (hits to the creature's body not notwithstanding).

When any hydra is affected by an area spell such as *fireball* or *lightning bolt*, the heads are treated as a single entities, with the damage distributed as evenly as possible among the heads. Although the heads are separate melee targets, they are still part of the same creature. The creature's body suffers as much damage as the heads took in total (i.e., the hydra gets one saving throw, but the heads and the body each take damage).

Spells that can kill a creature outright such as *death spell*, *power word kill*, or *disintegrate* kill the creature only if it fails its saving throw (if applicable). When determining a hydra's resistance to such spells, its effective hit dice are equal to its starting number of heads (or peak number, in the case of a lernaean hydra), and its effective hit points are equal to the total hit points of all the heads (damage to the body notwithstanding).

A spell that affects one creature or a limited area (such as *magic missile* or *burning hands*) must be directed either at the body or at one or more heads of the hydra, according to the limitations of the spell. Spells such as *charm monster*, *hold monster*; or *slow* affect the entire creature, as the beast effectively has only one brain—perhaps at the base of the necks inside the body.

#### What happens if a magic-user uses a sword when in desperate need?

If a character's need is truly great, the DM can allow any class of character to use a weapon prohibited to his class. The normal nonproficiency penalty applies (perhaps with an additional -1 to hit). If a player falls into the habit of declaring his characters in desperate need too often, however, the DM should either disallow the use of the prohibited weapon or give the character no experience award for completing the adventure.

#### What are the effects of blindness and deafness on spell-casting?

Blinded creatures are unable to cast any spell that requires a target, but spells that can be cast on an area (such as *fireball*) or delivered by touch (such as *cure light wounds*) may still be used. Deafness can cause spells with verbal components to be miscast and fail. The failure chance is up to you, but it shouldn't exceed 20% (less for spells with short casting times). The cleric spell *holy word* has a deafness effect that causes spells to fail 50% of the time; this is due mostly to the extreme power of the holy word, not merely the deafness.

#### What is the significance of weapon speed factors?

Weapon speed factors allow for comparison among weapons. The lower the speed factor, the quicker the weapon. Their most common use (and the only use mentioned in the rules) is for breaking ties on initiative. When a tie occurs, compare weapon speed factors; the lowest factor goes first. However, on the first round of a melee, when the opponents are closing, the longer weapons have the advantage. The advantage is also with mounted opponents attacking or defending against unmounted opponents and with characters who are defending or attacking from above. Spell-casting time is equivalent to the weapon speed factor. That is, a weapon with a speed factor of 3 is as slow as a three-segment spell for purposes of tie breaking.

#### How do you use the weapon to-hit adjustment tables in the *Players Handbook* (page 38) and *Unearthed Arcana* (page 27)? I don't understand what they mean.

The tables list the bonus or penalty given to a weapon against the basic armor types. For example, the line for Axe, Hand reads: -5, -4, -3, etc., for AC 0, AC 1, AC 2, etc., respectively. Full plate armor and shield gives AC 0, so a hand axe has a -5 to hit vs. full plate armor and shield. If the target were wearing *full plate armor* +1 and using no shield, the adjustment is still AC 0. However, full plate armor alone is AC 1, so you use the AC 1 column regardless of magical bonuses, and the hand axe has a -4 to hit. The same holds true for dexterity bonuses. These tables are for attacking humans, demi-humans, and humanoids—never for attacking monsters. Use of the tables is strictly optional; they were included in the game mainly to satisfy the real history buffs who know that certain weapons were much more effective than others on the medieval battlefield.

#### What do the following weapons look like: bardiche, spetum, voulge, guisarme, halberd, and scimitar?

Some of the less-known weapons in the AD&D game are pictured and described in *Unearthed Arcana*, pages 123-128. The weapons depicted on these pages include everything on your list except the scimitar. A scimitar is simply a curved broad sword used by Arabs and Saracens. If you've seen any movies depicting the Middle East during the crusades, you've seen scimitars.

#### What is a morning star?

A morning star looks like a long, thin club with spikes or flanges at the business end. The morning star in the AD&D game is similar to a mace but is longer and heavier. Some books on weapons identify a ball and chain as a morning star, but this combination is considered to be a flail in the AD&D game.

#### Why did *Unearthed Arcana* take shields away from assassins? It

seems a high price to pay for the option of having a good alignment.

*Unearthed Arcana* is in error. Assassins may use shields but not during a melee round in which the character is engaged in the act of assassination. The alignment expansion was not an error.

#### Can a character with a *girdle of giant strength* throw a halberd?

When one of my players tried to do this I allowed it, but with a big to-hit penalty.

You were correct. Pole arms are not intended to be thrown, no matter what the thrower's strength. Anything, however, can be thrown with some chance of success. For throwing a pole arm, we suggest a to-hit penalty of -4 at short range (10' or less), -6 at medium range (11-20'), and -9 at long range (21-30'). We also suggest that you use these ranges outdoors where other missiles have ranges measured in yards. A pole arm is far too long for a human-sized creature to throw like a hand axe (so that the weapon spins or tumbles), no matter how much strength is available. Spear-type throws are possible, but hits can inflict damage only if the pole arm that is thrown has a spear point. Use spear damage (1-6) in this case, not pole-arm damage.

What are the effects of total darkness on combat? When last faced with this problem, I simply ruled that everything within the darkness was invisible, and I applied the -4 to-hit penalty.

You handled the situation correctly. More information on the effects of darkness is given on page 32 of the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*.

#### What does the space requirement listed for each weapon mean?

The space requirement is exactly that: the minimum space a character must have in order to use a weapon. For example, a fighter must be standing in a space at least 4' wide to use a battle axe. Space requirements are cumulative; therefore, two fighters using battle axes side-by-side would require 8' of space.

Can creatures with at-will abilities use such abilities while attacking? Can they use several abilities in the same round, say one per segment?

Creatures that have at-will abilities may use one such ability, once per round, in addition to normal movement or attacks.

#### Can magic-users move during a round when they cast spells?

A magic-user must remain stationary only as long as the casting time of the spell. After casting a spell, the mage can move during the remainder of the round. For example, a *fireball* takes three segments; therefore, the mage casting it could

have seven segments worth of movement after casting the spell. See page 102 of the *Players Handbook* for per-segment movement rates.

#### Is it possible for a character to leave a melee without exposing his back?

The DM might allow a character to back out of a melee at half speed so that the opponent's free attack would be frontal. Some campaigns allow a friendly character to cover for a retreating character so that the extra attack is resolved normally against the character who is covering.

#### Can fighters with multiple attacks attack more than one opponent per round?

Yes; so can monsters and the members of other character classes that get multiple attacks.

#### How long does paralyzation last? Is it permanent until cured? What cures paralyzation? What is paralyzation, really?

In medical terms, paralyzation is the loss of sensation in part of the body as the victim's brain, for one reason or another, no longer controls the body. The uncontrolled muscles relax, and the victim goes limp. Autonomic muscles, such as the heart and lungs, are unaffected. Some

kinds of paralysis in the AD&D game (paralysis caused by ghouls and ghosts, for example) cause the victim to become rigid and immobile. In either case, paralysis affects only the body, not the mind. The victim can still think and use psionics or any form of movement that does not require muscular effort. For example, if a character becomes paralyzed while using a *fly* spell, he can still fly until the spell runs out.

Paralyzation is not permanent. It can last anywhere from several rounds or turns to as much as a day. It can be removed with a *remove paralysis* spell (which removes paralysis of all types) or by a *cure disease*, *neutralize poison*, or *dispel magic* spell, depending on what caused the paralysis. Paralysis caused by undead creatures is disease- or fear-based; paralysis caused by living creatures is poison-based; paralysis caused by a *glyph of warding* or the illusionist spell *paralyzation* is magic-based. The AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, Volume 1, lists the duration for ghoul paralysis as 3-8 rounds and ghast paralysis as 5-10 rounds. Paralysis caused by more powerful creatures lasts longer; lich paralysis, for example, lasts until dispelled.

Can a character with a bastard-sword proficiency also use long swords and two-handed swords, or

does the character instead, require a proficiency in both long and two-handed swords?

Each weapon on the weapons lists requires a separate proficiency. Although a bastard sword can be used one-handed with the same effect as a long sword, its larger size requires different handling. Likewise, the bastard sword requires different handling than the longer and heavier two-handed sword. However, if a character is proficient in bastard sword, he may use that sword either way.

#### What is a bastard sword's space requirement and speed factor when used one-handed?

The same as when it is used two-handed.

If a fighter is specialized (or double specialized) in a bastard sword, does he get the specialization bonuses when using the sword two-handed and one-handed?

A bastard sword is primarily a two-handed weapon. For purposes of game balance, it is best to limit specialization bonuses to two-handed use (or let the player choose).

When a character gains proficiency with a multipurpose weapon

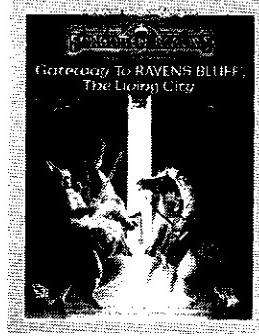
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# A Taste of Horror

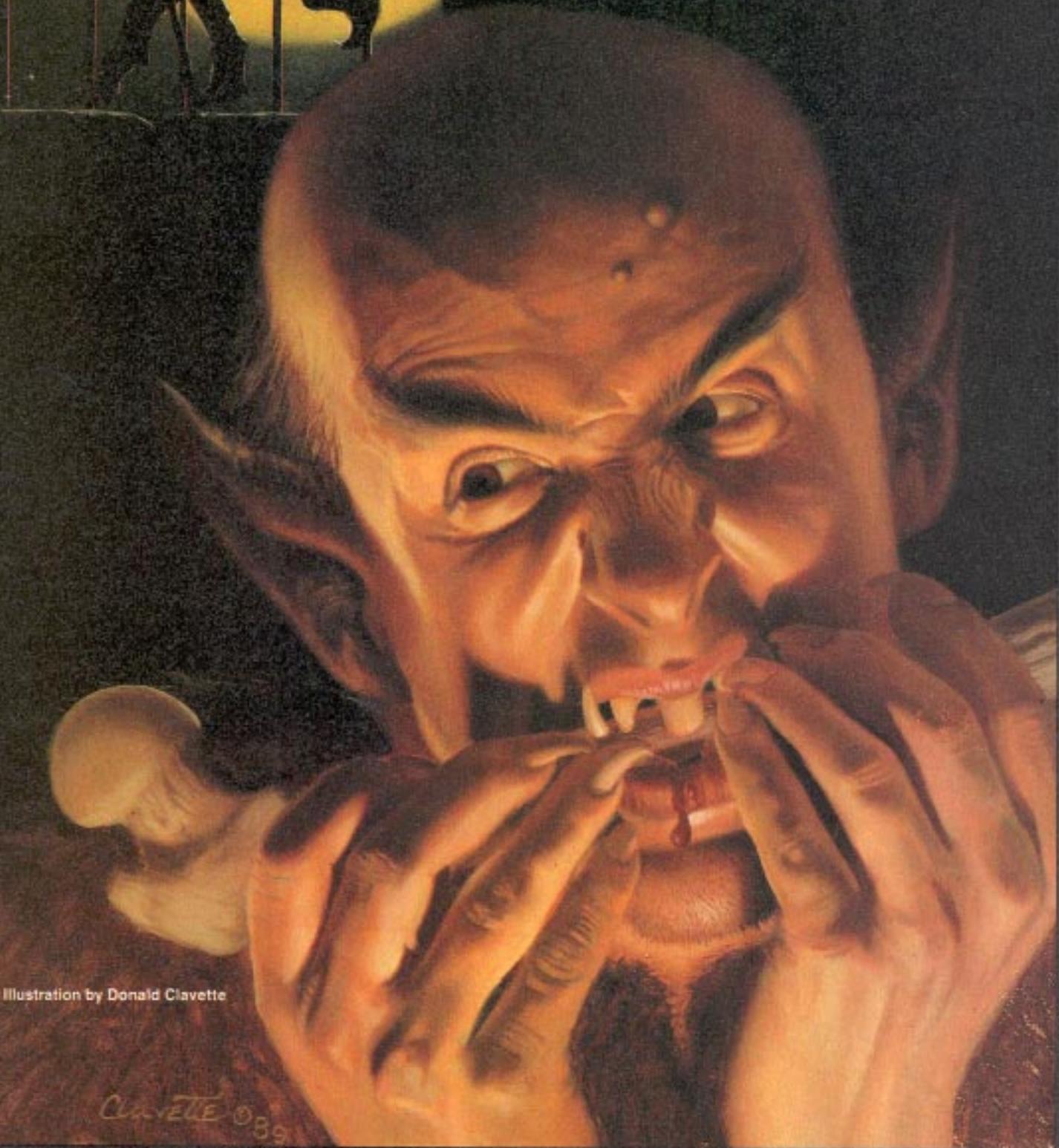
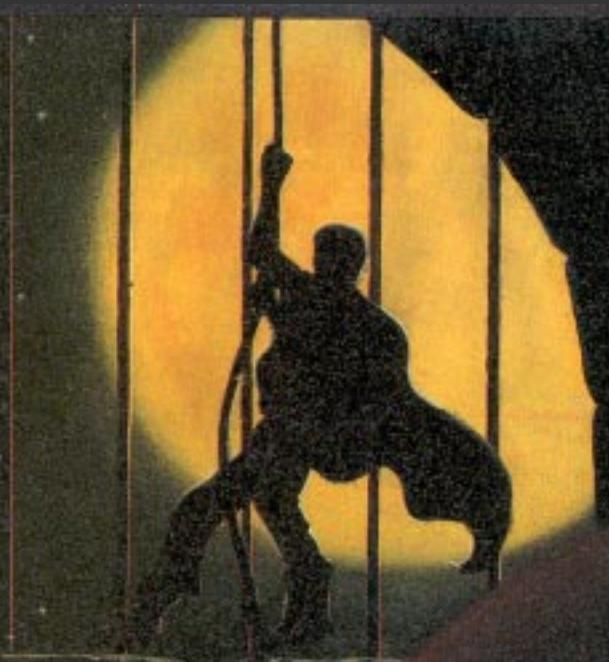


Illustration by Donald Clavette

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Illustrations by Thomas Baxa

# The Dragon's Bestiary

All life crawls where mind flayers rule

by Stephen Inniss

The homeworlds of the Illithids (mind flayers) and the depths of the Earth most thoroughly colonized by the Illithids, as described by the sages in "The Sunset World," share a number of common features. There are three major classes of creatures always associated with Illithid activity: amorphs (jellies, oozes, trappers, ropers, and company); fungi; and Illithidae (alien beings of which the Illithids themselves are the most notable examples). Some of these creatures are well known to adventurers in the Underdark; others are known only from areas fully colonized by Illithids. Table 1 shows some life forms typically associated with Illithid lairs.

## Amorphs

Most of the amorphs are found in the same regions of Illithid homeworlds as the Illithids themselves, with the exception of a few such as the dun pudding of the Sunside deserts and the white pudding of the Nightland glaciers. Their ranges seldom overlap. Of the intelligent amorphs,

most avoid and are avoided by Illithids. Illithids do not prey on amorphs, which seem to be unpalatable to them. Because amorphs are so commonly distributed across the known worlds, it is likely that Illithids allow them to breed where found or else transport them from world to world for reasons unknown to others.

## Fungi

**Gas spore.** Gas spores were apparently developed as part of the Illithid defensive array. Domestic forms, though mindless, ignore Illithids but approach other life forms. The resemblance to the beholder is too close to be coincidental, particularly since beholders are notorious allies of Illithids in the Underearth. Despite this, gas spores are found on Illithid homeworlds while beholders are not. Possibly beholders have been eliminated from the homeworlds by the Illithids because of their potential for danger, or possibly the Illithid worlds are simply too windy for beholders. Other hypotheses have been

advanced as well: that gas spores were developed in the Underearth and have spread to other Illithid habitations, or that beholders and gas spores were both developed by Illithids. This last is considered unlikely.

**Mold, brown.** Brown mold is unaffected by the reddish light of the suns under which the Illithids live, and is common in the warmer regions. The forms encountered there, however, do not drain heat from living creatures (Illithids apparently eliminate such varieties) and are often used to cool Illithid towers in the hotter part of the year.

**Shrieker:** The shrieker's habits are eminently practical on Illithid homeworlds. Any commotion is likely to attract a number of predators, so only the most formidable creatures attempt to graze on a patch of shriekers.

## Illithidae

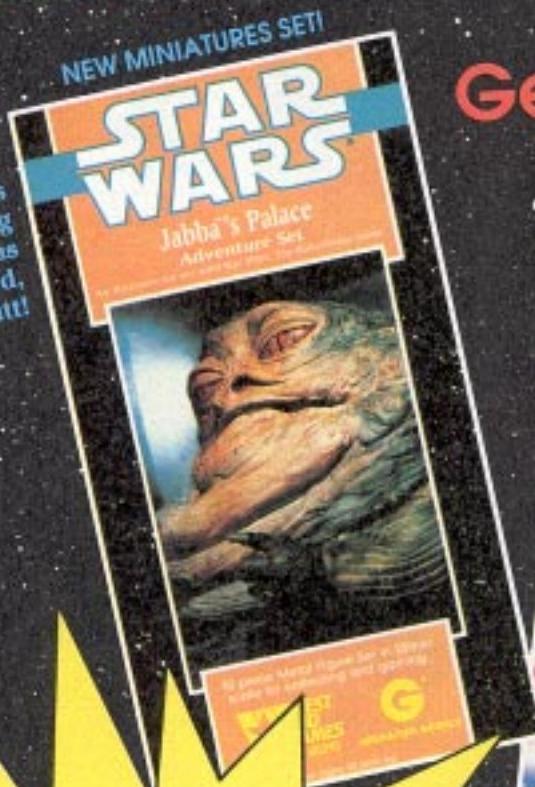
All of the Illithidae have four limbs with four digits each if they are terrestrial; all have tentacles arranged around a beaked mouth in some multiple of four; all possess both gills and lungs (though airbreathing forms use the gills only during periods of great exertion); and all have a tough skin typically covered with a slime that is proof against the glues of such amorphs as the mimic and roper. All Illithidae have a larval form that lives for a period inside some other organism, typically a creature killed by its parent.

Many of the Illithidae are equivalent to mammals or reptiles of the surface world. The cessirid resembles a wolf, for instance, while the saltor is much like a monkey or baboon, and the kigrid fills the role of a bear, pig, or hyena (the embrac is most like some carnivorous plants). It is possible to define other such equivalent Illithidae by converting the statistics of typical mammals, reptiles, or dinosaurs. Armor classes are typically two or three places better; hit dice are either quadrupled or increased by six (whichever is less); and intelligences (for adult forms) are increased by several points so that the usual range is from low intelligence to very intelligent. Alignments are typically neutral or evil. These creatures generally exhibit some degree of magic resistance, and the more intelligent ones may have psionic abilities, including disciplines appropriate to their modes of life. All are predators at least on occasion. Attacks include the effects of the feeding tentacles, which may paralyze, kill, induce pain, or possibly act as Illithid tentacles do. Skin colors are typically some shade of purple, red, black, or gray, or possibly white in those forms that lurk near the icecaps and glaciers.

On homeworlds, where light is dim at best and sometimes absent, all of these creatures are vulnerable to illumination equal to normal sunlight. Light of intensity equal to a *light* spell or brighter causes

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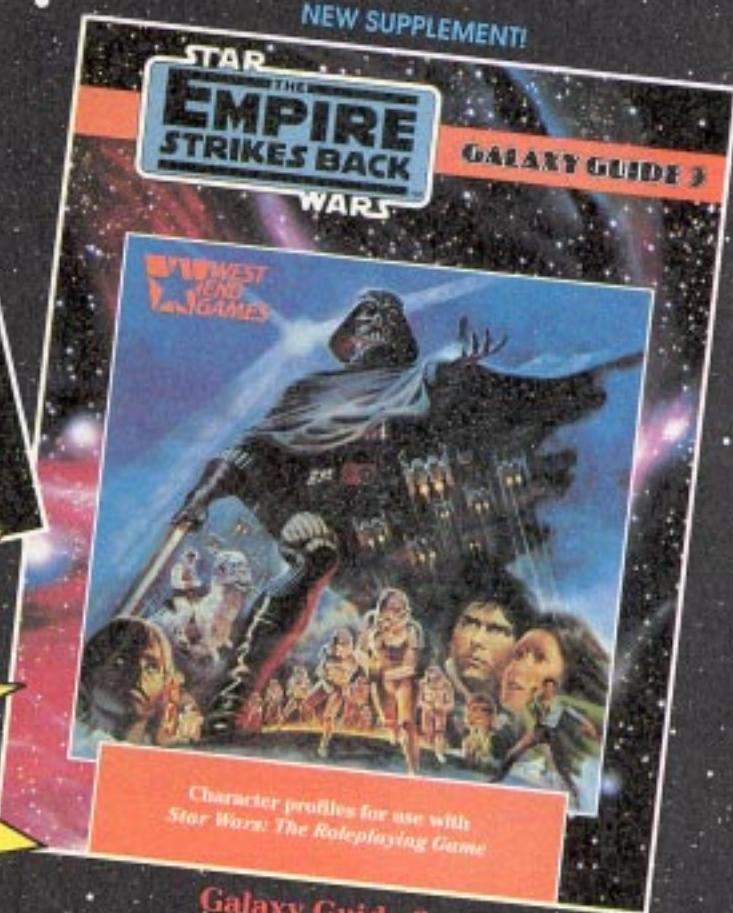
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them to strike at -1 to hit (if they are capable of attacks and have eyes). Additionally, in full sunlight, they take 1 hp damage per turn.

The "frequency" values given for the following four Illithidae apply only to Illithid homeworlds or subterranean lands. These creatures are not encountered elsewhere.

Note: A fraction of the Illithids whose psionic strength is exceptional (5% chance if the total is over 275) have other psionic abilities in addition to the usual Illithid powers (determine as if for a human magic-user). There is a 20% chance that such an individual will have 0-3 (1d4 - 1) additional attack modes and 0-3 additional defense modes.

## Cessirid

FREQUENCY: Rare (common near Illithids)

NO. APPEARING: 1-20

ARMOR CLASS: 4

MOVE: 18"/15"

HIT DICE: 8 + 16

% IN LAIR: 5%

TREASURE TYPE: Nil

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 bite

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-16

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Poisonous bite, psionics*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Psionics*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 5%

INTELLIGENCE: Average

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful neutral (evil tendencies)*

SIZE: M (2' at shoulder)

PSIONIC ABILITY: 90

Attack/Defense Modes: B,E/F,G

Cessirids travel in packs. A cessirid's body is canine, with a large head, outsize eyes, and a rending beak in place of teeth. There are four short tentacles around the mouth. Short spines jut from the back. The skin is smooth, slimy, and pale gray in color. The spaces between the toes are webbed. Though small, cessirids are shockingly powerful.

In combat, a cessirid leaps and bites at its adversary, inflicting horrible damage with its outer jaws. The tentacles around the mouth cause a stinging and burning sensation upon contact with flesh (save vs. poison for each bite that hits; failure yields a -3 penalty to armor class, saving throws, and to-hit rolls) that lasts for 3-12 turns.

Cessirids may use the following psionic disciplines at the 6th level of mastery: *body equilibrium, ESP* and *dimension door*. They use these in the pursuit and detection of prey, or to escape if attacked by a superior force.

These creatures live in tightly knit packs, working together silently and efficiently to bring down prey of any sort (they can communicate with others of their kind telepathically over distances of up to 24' at no cost to psionic strength).

Though they are willing at times to negotiate with other intelligent creatures, they have little desire for anything but food and reproduction. In general, they are wily and treacherous. On occasion, if they are not hungry, cessirids will harry and torment prey for hours before killing it. Rivalry between cessirid packs is sharp, but they will generally band together against other creatures.

Reproduction is accomplished by depositing 1-3 larvae in the body of a victim. The juveniles grow quickly and seem able to prevent the decay of the corpse during their development. Adults guard the larvae until the latter metamorphose. For reasons not entirely clear, cessirids prefer intelligent creatures for larval food.

Thanks to millenia of training and breeding, the dogs of the githyanki (kaoulgrim, from "Hounds of Space and Darkness," in DRAGON® issue # 117) and the cessirids are fanatic enemies, and will fight one another regardless of other constraints (even magical *charms*). Szarkel, the dogs of the githzerai (from the same article and issue as kaoulgrim) will always avoid meetings with cessirids. Szarkel can detect the approach of cessirids within one mile, probably by detecting the use of the latter's psionic talents.

## Embrac

FREQUENCY: Uncommon (common near Illithids)

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVE: 3"

HIT DICE: 11+22

% IN LAIR: Nil

TREASURE TYPE: C

NO. OF ATTACKS: 8

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-8 each (tentacles)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Paralysis, constriction, surprise on 1-3, psionics*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Psionics*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 20%

INTELLIGENCE: Low

ALIGNMENT: Neutral evil

SIZE: L (10' body, 20' tentacles)

PSIONIC ABILITY: 80 + 1d20

Attack/Defense Modes: A/F

Embracs are solitary predators that lie in wait for prey. They are slow and trouble to move themselves only when the supply of game in an area has been exhausted. An embrac's body is short, stocky, and rather sacklike in shape. It has stout limbs that are heavily clawed at the tips. These are used to anchor the embrac while it wrestles with prey. The head is large and bears a saw-edged beak. An embrac's feeding tentacles are as thick as a man's waist at their base, and taper to three separate points that serve as fingers. The tentacles bear numerous spikes and hooks on their undersides. The body color and pattern of an embrac are variable: usually spots and stripes in shades of black, gray, white, or

dull red that conceal the outlines of the embrac. The skin is slimy and bears bony plates just under the surface.

Embracs may employ the following psionic disciplines at the 5th level of mastery: *empathy*, *ESP invisibility*, and *mind bar*. They may also produce illusions that are like a *spectral force* at the 5th level of casting in all respects except that the illusion has no potential to cause direct damage. The cost of this latter psionic discipline is two strength points per round.

An embrac typically lies in wait, concealing itself as best it can (surprising prey on a 1-3 on 1d6). At the approach of prey, it may attempt to lure it with some illusion that seems appropriate from an *ESP* scan. Anything that comes within 20' is vulnerable to the embrac's tentacles. The tentacles inflict 2-8 hp damage on the first and each following round of combat unless the victim forgoes other activities and makes a successful bend bars/lift gates roll. Those held by an embrac strike at -2 to hit. In addition to the constricting damage, the spikes on the tentacles exude a poison that causes paralysis for 2-12 turns unless a saving throw vs. paralysis is successful.

Embracs are occasionally known to use some of the few manufactured items that their body forms allow, and they have been known to stockpile precious goods for use as bargaining tools. They generally lair in caves or similar dwellings, and close the entrances with boulders if they detect formidable enemies. Embracs hold all other life in low regard. They reproduce in the same manner as cessirids. Like cessirids, embracs are occasionally seen as servitors among Illithid communities.

## Kigrid

FREQUENCY: Rare (common in Illithid areas)

NO. APPEARING: 1-3

ARMOR CLASS: 3

MOVE: 12"/15"

HIT DICE: 9+27

% IN LAIR: 20%

TREASURE TYPE: C

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 claws and 1 bite

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-8/2-8/2-16

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Poisonous bite*, *psionics*, rear claws for 2-12/2-12

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Surprised only on a 1 in 10, *psionics*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 35%

INTELLIGENCE: Very

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil

SIZE: M (5' long)

PSIONIC ABILITY: 90 + 2d20

Attack/Defense Modes: A,E/F,G,H

Kigrads may be found singly or in small groups. They are always hungry and will attack and eat any vulnerable creature. A kigrid is a stocky, four-legged creature with a short tail, powerfully built legs, a

short neck, and broad head. It has sharp claws, and there are four tough, spiky tentacles around the broad, beaked mouth. The skin is black and the eyes a dull red. These beasts are cunning and malicious, and generally unreliable.

In combat, a kigrid will strike with claws and teeth. If the forepaws both score hits, the rear claws may be used for additional attacks. If the beak hits the opponent, a saving throw vs. poison is necessary. A failed saving throw means the poison causes swelling and pain that lasts for 2-5 rounds (penalty of -2 to armor class, saving throws, and rolls to hit).

Kigrads have the psionic disciplines of *ESP body equilibrium*, *levitation*, and *invisibility*. They are perfect mimics and often use sounds to deceive prey. Their tentacles allow them a limited ability to manipulate objects, and they may rig simple traps.

Kigrads generally avoid one another unless they are closely related; the more powerful individuals generally regard the less powerful as food. They reproduce in the same manner as cessirids and embracs. On occasion, large kigrads are used by Illithids as beasts of burden; how this is accomplished without constant supervision is unknown.

## Saltor

FREQUENCY: Rare (common in Illithid areas)

NO. APPEARING: 10-40

ARMOR CLASS: 4

MOVE: 12"x12" (argid) or 15"x9" (jendrid)

## Kigrids



HIT DICE: See Table 2

% IN LAIR: 50%

TREASURE TYPE: C in lair, M, L

NO. OF ATTACKS: 5 (four tentacles plus bite or weapon)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: See Table 2

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Tentacles

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 40%

INTELLIGENCE: Low or average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

SIZE: S to M (see Table 2)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil or 130 + 2d20

Attack/Defense Modes: Nil or A/F,G

Saltors are akin to Illithids as baboons are to men. A saltor somewhat resembles a baboon in form, but it possesses four tentacles about the mouth, three-fingered hands that bear opposable thumbs, the ability to stand upright, and slimy skin. Saltors are of varying color (generally white or black, but occasionally gray, violet, or red), and of varying build and size according to the needs of their Illithid masters, though a few saltors live independently and determine their own tribal characteristics. A saltor's statistics vary with size, as shown on Table 2.

Within each size class there are two distinct physical forms. The more common of the two is of typical baboonlike build: the argid. The other sort, the jendrids, is longer limbed (a foot taller than the statistics indicate for size). Argids and jendrids are both agile climbers, but jendrids are faster on the ground and slower in the branches.

A saltor may attack with its tentacles and bite, or it may attack with tentacles and use a weapon. The tentacles have the



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same effect as Illithid tentacles (q.v.), but the time between implantation and death is 2-5 rounds. A saltor makes tentacle attacks at -3 against creatures whose heads are more than 3' higher or lower than its own and cannot use tentacle attacks at all against creatures whose heads are more than 5' higher or lower. Saltors use crude spears that do damage as per the thrower's bite (the variation is due to size). Spears are typically used either before melee or against opponents that cannot be touched. Unarmed saltors may throw rocks (range 1"/2"/3", short/medium/long) for damage equal to the bite minus 1 hp, at the rate of one rock per round.

Saltors of low intelligence have no psionic abilities; those of average intelligence have psionic power plus the disciplines of *levitation*, *ESP* and *body equilibrium*, all at the 5th level of mastery. Among populations controlled by Illithids, only the smaller two sizes possess psionic power.

Saltors are bold if they outnumber their opponents, and they are unswervingly obedient when ordered by superiors. Their actions are always orderly and well coordinated. Though they may be bred for almost any manual task and have diverse talents, they are universally cruel, take delight in tormenting and coercing lesser creatures, and consider underlings to be the greatest delicacy. They reproduce, as

**Table 1**  
**Monsters Associated With Illithids**

**Amorphs**

Gelatinous cube  
Gray ooze  
Lurker above  
Mimic  
Ochre jelly  
Pudding, deadly  
Roper  
Scum creeper  
Slithering tracker  
Trapper  
Crystal ooze  
Mustard jelly

**Fungi**

Ascomoid  
Basidiomycete  
Fungus, violet  
Gas spore  
Mold, brown  
Mold, yellow  
Obliviax  
Phycomycete  
Shrieker  
Ustilagor  
Zygomycete

**Illithidae**

Carrion crawler  
Cessirid  
Embrac  
Illithid  
Kigrid  
Saltor

**Table 2**  
**Saltor's Statistics**

Hit dice	Damage	Size
3+6	0/0/0/0/1-2	S (2' tall)
4+8	0/0/0/0/1-3	S (3' tall)
5+10	1/1/1/1/1-4	S (4' tall)
6+12	1/1/1/1/2-5	M (5' tall)

Illithids do, by destroying the brains of other creatures and planting their larvae to grow in the empty skulls.

Wild populations of saltors are more variable than those controlled by the Illithids. The members of a group tend to be of the same type, size, and color, but these bands will include 1-4 exceptional individuals if they are far removed from an Illithid settlement. Exceptional saltors have 1-3 of the following psionic disciplines, determined at random:

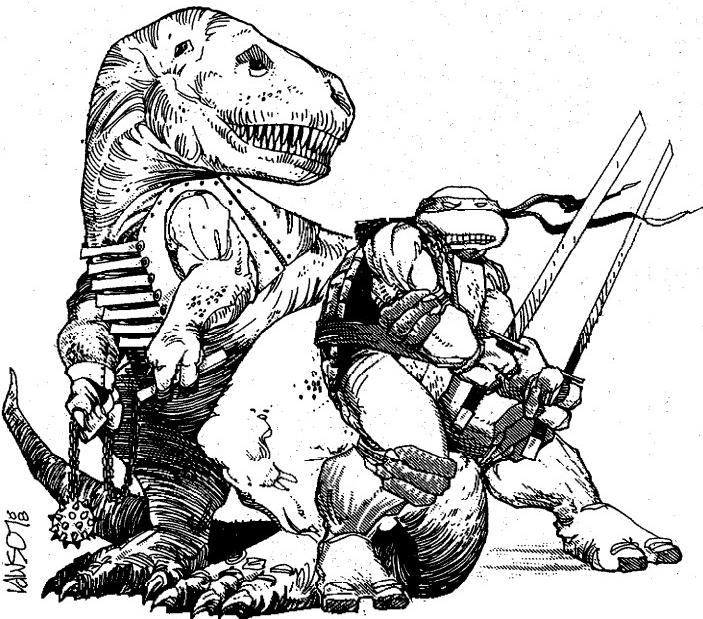
1d6	Discipline
1	<i>Domination</i>
2	<i>Hypnosis</i>
3	<i>Dimension door</i>
4	<i>Dimension walk</i>
5	<i>Mind Bar</i>
6	<i>Astral projection</i>

Wild saltors are generally found living in primitive circumstances. Large settlements or signs of sophisticated manufactures attract the destructive attention of the Illithids.

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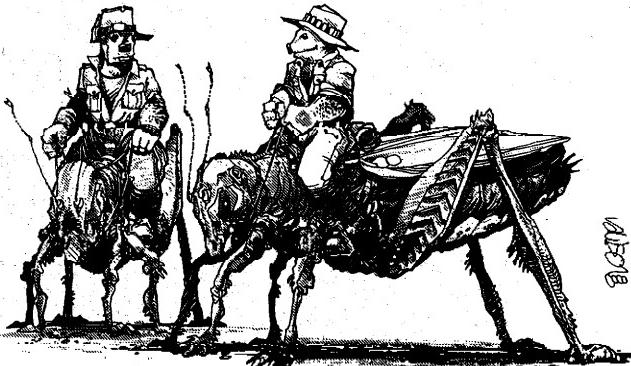
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# The Sunset World

## In the realm of the mind flayers

by Stephen Inniss

*From the opening address of the CXIXth annual meeting of the Imperial Association for the Advancement of Arts Magical, convened at the Koaadian Academy on Maskday in the moon of Galewake, in the seventh year of the reign of Irion. The speaker: Academican Fourth M. Sungale, leader of the Ninth Interplanar Expedition.*

I am greatly honored to speak before so august an assembly. Looking out among you, I can see many who are my undoubted seniors in scholarship, learning, and originality of thought, and many nobles distinguished in deeds and lineage. I am humbly aware that my own achievements and station are less spectacular. Yet because of the nature of our expedition, it pleased the Council to choose one whose knowledge is broad rather than deep, a simple soul attracted as much to action as to learning, and whose station is not so high as to bind with duties. So it is that I was selected as coordinator of our enterprise, and so it is that I now present you with our findings.

Those of you who attended the Extraordinary Session of two years ago will recall our mandate: to study all aspects of the Illithids—vulgarily known as mind flayers—especially their nature, origin, and purpose. The reasons for this were twofold. First, the findings of the late Academican Kratanitkul, whose investigations of Underearth societies had uncovered an extensive and elaborate network of Illithid activity. Second, the urgent command of our Emperor Himself. This latter came hard on the heels of rumors concerning the lands beneath the Gray Hills and the tragic but lucrative foray therein by the Sixth Legion Elite, and it was accompanied by a generous influx of funds.

It has long been known that Illithids are foreign to our world. We therefore made it one of our primary objectives to study these creatures at their point of origin. We will explain to you the processes we used to gain them, and what we learned in the enterprise, but suffice it to say that we managed to contact certain elements among the githzerai. The two individuals who agreed to serve as our guides were members of the Monzari, one of the rebel Sporting Clans. After long negotiations, they admitted that they knew the location of the Illithid homeworld and agreed to guide us there.

Our complement consisted of representatives from each of the major Disciplines; two individuals most suited by training or temperament to the rigors of research in the field. We particularly sought Masters

and Academicans learned in herb and beast lore, and in the ways of the Undeath. To these scholars and their assistants were added two mages skilled in spells of combat and protection; 12 representatives of the Order of Celestial Wanderers; and a company of assorted hunters and warriors under the leadership of Lord Aragson. Our Monzari guides brought two lean, doglike creatures they called *szarkel*. The *szarkel* are imposing and graceful beasts, but difficult to control; we found them to be a great hindrance and nuisance. We will present you with a short monograph on the breed and its affinities; I recommend that you attend that meeting, for reasons that will become clear.

We discovered our destination to be an alternate plane, surprisingly near our own, yet in an unexplored direction. The journey was uneventful save for some interesting observations of the Astral luminaries in that region.

The first sight of our destination was less than encouraging. We arrived on a rocky mound littered with ruins, and surrounded on all sides by a swamp of shattered and decaying trees and sooty black grasses. We hurriedly pitched our tents against a chill, damp breeze that brought a rotting smell from the stagnant waters and raised unpleasant sounds among the standing stones and sparse, black vegetation of our hillock. The only warmth issued from the sullen fires of a swollen orb half the size of our own Sun, perched a finger's width above the horizon. We stumbled in the blurred shadows and diffuse light, glancing upward now and then at the half-familiar stars that twinkled in a dark blue sky. A huge waxing moon, coppery in that half-light, stood somewhat past its zenith. Fleshy-leaved bushes writhed to avoid our touch, or grasped at passing arms and legs. There was a shrill keening, barely audible over the wind, from somewhere high above. From the darkness of the swamp came a bellowing and thrashing sound.

As we were to learn, this inauspicious site was, in fact, one of the safer and more habitable regions, and in one of its less objectionable seasons. The sun seldom shifted far from its position, for which

reason we called our new home the Sunset World, though we were to learn that its inhabitants know it as Ssirik Akuar.

Traveling sunward, the lands grow hotter and more arid until at last the explorer comes to eternal noon, where water boils when it touches the parched earth. In the opposite direction are the Nightlands, capped and covered with ice as the coldest regions of our own world. Between the Sunlands and the Nightlands is twilit habitable region: a ring, thickest at the poles and thinnest at the equator, between the glaciers and the salt flats that cover opposite halves of the globe. A chill wind blows from the Nightlands toward the warmth and water flows likewise first in frozen glaciers, then in chill fresh melt-water, and at last in tepid, briny rivers. This flow of air and water never ceases or changes in direction; the trees, bushes, and the land itself are shaped by it.

The Sunset World is not without its seasons, as we surmised from the broken and uprooted trees in the swamps around us. As seen from our encampment, the sun dips a little below the horizon after the hottest season and rises a little above its usual position before the warm weather, but the change of seasons is caused by its variation in size. Over the course of our stay, the sun shrank and the wind chilled and weakened, only for the sun to grow rapidly again to three times the girth of our own Sun and the wind to grow to a torrential gale for a brief hot season. This entire cycle takes no more than 20 of our weeks. Fogs and mists are common near bodies of water, as the changes in temperature are so sudden and great. Seen from our campsite, the moon rises as a thin crescent near the sun, waxing until it sets toward the Nightlands; this occurs over a period of perhaps 10 of our days, after which it appears again to repeat the performance some 10 days later.

The poorly drained land we first encountered is typical of the habitable belt. Much of the region between the ice and the salty deserts consists of swamps or shallow lakes. Deep bodies of water and mountains are rare. Water is most often found in pools and seeps, and seldom in waterfalls or rapids.

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This description will illustrate why the Illithids are found only in the underground regions of our world, where the light is dim at best and the air is often damp. Ssirik Akuar's dim, red sun causes them no more discomfort than torchlight would, unlike the vigorous light of our own daystar which would blind them and burn their skins. The only element missing from their subterranean haunts is the everpresent wind of the Sunset World.

When we had camped and surveyed the area, we began simple investigations of the Sunset World's animal and plant life. What we had expected to be a relatively simple exercise proved to be most taxing and hazardous, though rewarding enough in an academic sense.

The plant life of Ssirik Akuar is black rather than green; green plants do not thrive in the available light. In the sunward regions, some of these plants are gray or silver due to the hairy or waxy surfaces that shed excess light and retain moisture. In most regions, however, the vegetation has the color of pitch. Some of the larger trees and bushes are streamlined in the direction of the wind, having oval-shaped trunks and sunward-pointing branches. Others grow rapidly in periods of greater heat and light, and occasionally collapse under the impact of the strong winds that follow. Still others avoid the

worst of the high wind by folding their leaves or by moving about in search of shelter. In general, the plant life of Ssirik Akuar is more active than our own. To our discomfort, we later discovered that these plants may actively defend themselves against animal life, or even attempt to trap animals for food, either with viscous leaves and simple water traps for small creatures or with moving tendrils and spiked branches or pits for larger creatures. Many of these plants protect themselves with secretions that make them painful and often dangerous to touch.

Fungoid life is abundant on the Sunset World and includes many motile forms. Here we encountered a surprise. Many of these lifeforms are sorts familiar to those who travel the Underearth of our own world. The significance of this at first escaped us. Unfortunately, not all of our researchers escaped the more aggressive fungi.

No less surprising was Master Temrik's identification of an entire suite of animal life already known to inhabit the Underearth: the amorphs, as she is pleased to call them. These include the crop of boneless and shapeless creatures commonly known as oozes, trappers, deadly puddings, ropers, jellies, mimics, lurkers, and the like. These, like the fungi, proved to be a hazard. Envision a surface world in

which trappers may masquerade as gravel banks or sandy clearings, and where ropers may conceal themselves among the stumps of the forests! Fortunately, these creatures were not a significant menace to our campsite itself once we posted guards.

The second and dominant form of animal life was more actively dangerous. While these were less familiar to students of the Underearth, they do indeed have representatives in our own world. They include the Illithids, of course, but more surprisingly, they include the creature known as the carrion crawler and possibly some other less-known denizens of the deep passages. Just as the dominant life forms of our own world are of a common plan, so too with the build of these creatures. There is an internal skeleton of chitin rather than bone. The skin is thick and generally covered with a protective layer of mucus (though in the sunward regions it may be rough and sharklike instead). There are two eyes, and in addition to lungs, even the air-breathing forms have gills (those that cannot breathe water employ these during periods of extreme exertion). Adults have four limbs with four digits apiece.

Creatures of the Sunset World generally go through a grublike larval stage in which they have a variable number of limbs; these larvae almost invariably grow

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from eggs laid in corpses or masses of rotten vegetation, though there are also some more sophisticated adaptions as in the case of the Illithid. The carrion crawler is an example of a form which never reaches the adult stage but reproduces in the larval stage. A distinctive feature both in larval and adult forms is the presence of tentacles around the mouth in some multiple of four. These serve as organs of touch, taste, and smell, but their primary purpose is to capture and manipulate food. To this end, the tentacles may be provided with suckers, blades, or hooks, or covered with poisons that kill or subdue. The most advanced forms carry special subunits that break off and act independently by injecting poison or burrowing into the victim. The mouth consists of a complex collection of hard parts protected by an external beak.

The dominant life forms are found in great abundance on the land, and include a number of batlike forms as well as amphibians. We had little occasion to venture into the larger bodies of water, but the purely aquatic forms we encountered (as much like cuttlefish or squid as like fishes) were of the same general plan as the terrestrial forms. Perhaps Ssirik Akuar also holds the race known as the aboleth, which shows a number of similarities to Ssirik Akuar animal life despite notable divergence. The pressure of time did not allow us to explore the possibility.

The animals of Ssirik Akuar, particularly those of the illithidlike body form, are often sentient or semisentient. Many are even resistant to magical or psionic attack (the latter seems to be a side effect of the former). Some of these creatures are even psionically endowed.

These animals are capable of long periods of inactivity followed by periods of furious motion as they encounter prey or predators. Their reflexes are exceptionally quick, and they are strong and difficult to kill, as we discovered to our chagrin on more than one occasion. All are voracious, as life in the habitable zones can be rather sparse. As a result, creatures of this world eat large amounts in short periods of time, as the flesh and vegetation of Ssirik Akuar are prone to rapid decay even at low temperatures. In spite of the scarcity of food, some creatures of Ssirik Akuar grow to exceptional size. As formidable as they are in our own world, Illithids are unexceptional in their own.

Though there is some specialization, most of the beasts of the Sunset World are omnivores; palatable plants and subduable animals are rare and not to be missed. There are numerous large and small flying forms which migrate back and forth over the habitable crescent according to the season and the creature's preferred clime. Likewise; some of the landbound creatures are migratory. Other forms are sessile and lie in wait for the migrants, retreating to burrows if conditions be-

come too severe.

When our explorations of the Sunset World's natural history were well underway, and we had achieved safety (though not comfort) in our base camp on the mound in the swamps, we began to fulfill our primary purpose: an investigation of the Illithids themselves. At first, we observed from a distance and investigated the numerous ruins we found. Later, we made cautious observations of isolated individuals at closer range. By this means, we gained a basic knowledge of the Illithid and its habits. Eventually, we were able to supplement this with information gained

scholar would be inclined to bring something so noisomely unpleasant home for study, and often the body is in poor condition upon arrival,

The Illithid is much like other members of the dominant form of animal life. The skin is mauve over most of the body and appears black in the light of Ssirik Akuar. The iris and white of the eye are of the same dead-white hue; in strong light, the eye appears featureless, lacking any pupil. However, in near-lightless conditions, a vertical slit is visible. Close examination of the light-adapted eye shows a series of small pinholes where the pupil closes. This accounts for stories that Illithids have no pupil, since adventurers generally bear a light source with them. It also vindicates the illustrator of *Gryriak's Bestiary*, who shows Illithids with narrow-slitted pupils. Presumably, a part of the Illithid dislike for light is the near blindness caused by the pupil's extreme adjustment.

As frequently reported, the touch of an Illithid feeding tentacle is deadly. Contrary to the usual accounts (doubtless based on observations made in the heat of battle), the Illithid does not attach its tentacle to the victim and simply "draw out the brain." The process, as we have reconstructed it, is more complicated and a great deal more plausible. On firm contact between the Illithid's tentacle and the victim's head, a specialized subunit of the tentacle detaches and burrows inward. Once firmly lodged in the flesh, it bores through the skull with a drill-like structure and forms an extension that reaches through the hole to touch the brain. Upon contact with the victim's brain, it disrupts all functions, thus causing instant death.

The Illithid must direct this activity at extremely close range (thus the common perception that the Illithid tentacle remains attached). Apparently, the Illithid sends telepathic instructions to the killing unit. We discovered by inadvertent experiment that the burrowing halts if the Illithid is slain or driven away, and that the burrowing unit then becomes inactive and may be removed with a knife (although there is a danger of infection).

The "drawing forth" of the brain of the victim has (like most rumors) a basis in fact. However, this follows the death of the prey rather than preceding it; in addition, it is a protracted procedure. When the prey cannot resist and the process is not likely to be interrupted, an Illithid places its mouth in contact with the skull of the victim at the point of the subunit's entry and removes a flap of skin. At this point, some of the Illithid's mouthparts function as bone saws. They produce a hole about half a handspan in width. The Illithid then uses its complicated feeding apparatus to remove and consume select portions of the disabled brain.

It may seem that this is a rather involved mode of nutrition, yielding a small return for the effort and wasting a great deal of



from the corpses of two confirmed solitary individuals which were provided for us through the efforts of Lord Aragson and his men. All of this was time consuming; for security, we had located our camp far from Illithid activity.

Prior to our expedition, knowledge of Illithid anatomy was scanty. The typical Illithid garment (both in our own world and on Ssirik Akuar) is a robe that conceals all but hands, feet, and head. Illithid bodies are rarely recovered for study, as encounters with Illithids typically end in the death of their opponents or the rapid retreat of the Illithids. In those rare instances in which Illithids are defeated and killed before they can retreat, the tendency of the flesh to putrefy quickly is an additional barrier. Only a dedicated

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potential food. Indeed, this is so. The Illithid's feeding apparatus is well-suited to a wide range of other foods, including ordinary flesh as well as certain seeds and fungi. Illithids regularly eat a variety of plants and animals, as was confirmed both by observation of gathering expeditions and from a catalog of the stomach contents of our two specimens. Though Illithids do seem to have a culinary preference for the brain, and will select that organ over any other, the primary function of this most infamous habit is not nutrition but reproduction!

Illithids are hermaphroditic and bear a poorly developed larva from an opening at a spot equivalent to the human solar plexus. An Illithid carrying such a larva will carefully remove the thinking parts of the brain from some prey animal and restore those parts which maintain the body, carefully sealing off the blood supply to the regions it has destroyed. The tiny larva is then inserted into the skull cavity, where it establishes a connection with the nerves and blood vessels of the body. The larva's control is sufficient to allow for swallowing and digestion of food provided by the adult. However, this is insufficient to support the growing Illithid. The host body gradually shrivels and atrophies as the larva draws on its reserves. As the larva grows, it fills its host's skull cavity and then loosens the connection between the skull bones so that the larva may expand upward and outward. When the host body is no longer useful, the larva metamorphoses and emerges as an Illithid of adult form, perhaps one-half to one-quarter of the normal size depending on the size and type of host. Highly intelligent hosts are preferred, presumably because the skull can be expanded further and possibly for subtler reasons associated with the development of psionic powers.

In several cases, Illithids were observed to carry out the initial series of operations without placing a larva. The reasons for this are unknown. Perhaps these were failed attempts to complete the procedure, or perhaps frequent practice is necessary so that all will proceed smoothly when the larva is ready.

We understand that the process of larva placement is a reconstruction; in no case did we observe the entire process. Our find of a partially developed larva in the dwelling of our second lone Illithid was invaluable, as were the results of closer investigations made at a later stage. While it is not certain from our results on Ssirik Akuar that Illithids can carry out the entire cycle using human or humanlike hosts, we strongly suspect so on the basis of popular accounts and of hints dropped by our githzerai guides. This has strong implications for attempts at negotiation with Illithids; overtures from creatures that are regularly used in such a fashion are not likely to be well received.

We observed a number of isolated and

peripheral individuals or groups living in what one may suppose is the primitive Illithid lifestyle. Like many of the Sunset Worlds predatory creatures, Illithids must locate scarce prey with a minimum of effort. Their semimagical abilities serve them well in this regard. The Illithid chooses some safe burrow or cave and projects itself astrally in search of food while the body remains in a state requiring little nourishment. These explorations require little energy and entail little risk.

When a source of food is located, the Illithid returns to its body and goes forth either alone or in company, depending on the effort required to harvest or subdue the food. An ability to pass over water and



mud unhindered and to levitate over difficult terrain allows the Illithid to take a direct route that involves little wasted energy and reduces exposure to possible hazards. Often the prevailing winds are employed in conjunction with levitation; the Illithid will rise up and let itself be carried downwind toward its destination. This is typically done only at low altitudes or in foggy weather because of the danger of airborne predators.

When prey is encountered at close quarters, an Illithid's ability to read and control minds allows detection and capture of this prey with a minimum of effort. If the Illithids are in a group, they may coordinate their activities mentally, or use verbal

and visual clues with a prearranged plan if the quarry is psionically aware. If mental control fails, an Illithid may use a blast of mental energy to kill or incapacitate its prey. Determined opposition usually causes the Illithid to retreat for the simple and logical reason that a weakened Illithid might not survive the journey home. An Illithid in the savage state is no safer than a human in our own swamps and jungles would be (perhaps less so). This habit (which appears to have been learned in Illithid prehistory) might well be the explanation for the reported cowardice of Illithids encountered in our own world, where they are well known for fleeing any encounter that begins to go against them. However, such a hypothesis may be at odds with what we later learned of the hunting habits of civilized Illithids.

While solitary Illithids are widespread, the majority of Illithids on the Sunset World live in settlements of between 50 and 1,000 individuals. These settlements generally consist of burrows and a cluster of stone towers on the leeward side of a hill. Entrances to the complexes are never at ground level; they are only accessible by air. This is presumably a precaution against vermin and large predators, as well as possible seasonal flooding. The towers are of varying thickness and height, and often have a cross section determined by the prevailing winds. Ranged about the central towers are the orderly fields and pastures that provide most of the settlement's needs. Illithid adults do not tend these; even junior members of the community merely supervise the work of various enslaved creatures.

Illithids abhor manual labor in any but the most refined form, and have reduced even the amount of labor that their slave species must perform through extensive alterations of the plants, animals, and fungi around them. Meat and draft animals and other servant forms are entirely obedient and dependent, in some cases requiring special dietary supplements that only the Illithids have the skill to produce. The various crops require little attention, being largely self-regulating in form and naturally resistant to invasion by weeds. Even the towers themselves are grown rather than constructed, being treelike growths with stony skeletons. Many of the Illithids' creations serve multiple functions, as in the case of the fungi that provide light, absorb waste, and serve as carpet and tapestry in Illithid dwellings. The most notable of the Illithid slave species is a creature that has a form similar to that of a baboon—the most Illithidlike of Ssirik Akuar's inhabitants. Nowhere did we observe human or humanlike slaves. Our githzerai guides volunteered that the Illithids of Ssirik Akuar have abandoned such practices.

Illithids of full-adult status spend much of their time in the hunt, in various political activities, in artistic and magical en-

deavors (including the shaping of new types of creatures), and in long periods of meditation. The late Master Ponder Greymantle made a particular study of the hunting practices of the civilized Illithids and followed several parties at a distance. He found that the Illithids prefer intelligent life for such sport (if sport it is), and may pass up larger and less-intelligent creatures for those that present a greater challenge. These are by no means idle amusements; the Illithids who participate risk serious injury or death. Despite this, while the hunters may feed on choice portions of the kill, they are seldom concerned to bring the remainder to their settlements (even when the distance is short). Their primary source of food is the livestock and fields tended by their slaves (and occasionally the slaves themselves). Expeditions may reach far sunward or far into the icy lands, though Illithids show signs of discomfort in dry air or when the temperature drops below freezing. The Illithids' usual mode of attack is a well-planned ambush at highly favorable odds for the Illithids. Pursuits of any length are rare.

Illithid political activity is poorly understood even after our closest studies. Apparently, Illithid society is divided into numerous tightly knit groups, all small and all mutually opposed, although they may be allied with other cliques for varying lengths of time. It appears that members of the same clique are often related to one another. The typical Illithid embrace, an interclasping of feeding tentacles, is seldom seen except with members of a clique. The reasons for this embrace are unknown, but it is probably that signals are exchanged; the tentacles are highly sensitive to taste and touch. Significantly, each partner in such an embrace is at the mercy of the other. This is the only known gesture of faith among Illithids. Open violence between cliques is rare and most often occurs in the form of ambushes and assassinations rather than full-scale battles. What body of law or custom regulates these procedures and prevents a condition of anarchy is unknown.

The third major Illithid activity is the production of various artworks, books, magical devices, and living creatures. This is the only sort of labor that confers status. Most frequent is the production of new animals, plants, or fungi through selective breeding or wholesale modification. The fields, stockpens, and slave quarters contain many more odd individuals than might be expected naturally, and the various domesticated forms vary greatly from settlement to settlement, apparently in response to local fashions or conditions. Peculiarly, Illithids were seen in one instance to be breeding a new version of one of the more formidable predators. This would seem to indicate that there is some yet undiscovered relationship between Illithids and the creatures they hunt in the

wilderness.

While no Illithids were observed to cast spells, they are highly skilled in the production of magical and psionic devices or substances, particularly various potions (this last accords well with reports from our own world that Illithids frequently keep several potions in their store of treasure). It seems that much of the special equipment wielded by Illithids both here and in the Sunset World is crafted by the Illithids themselves.

Illithid art is seldom representational. They seem to prefer abstract patterns of a complex and angular sort, in colors that are rather muddy to the human eye. Their few depictions are generally of violent scenes: hunts and conflicts between Illithids. One particularly vivid mural confirmed part of our story of Illithid reproduction and provided an additional bit of information: it would appear that the ultimate triumph is to use other Illithids as food for one's larva.

Illithids produce numerous books and scrolls, but we found those we examined to be either entirely factual or completely incomprehensible. If Illithids produce fiction, this is not immediately evident. Neither did we observe Illithids to erect shrines or temples or spend any time in worship; reports that they have no deities are evidently correct. It is also notable that Illithids seldom assemble in large groups except under the most unusual circumstances. Only once during our stay did we observe such an action.

Illithid meditation remains a mystery to us. We thought at first that astral projection took place during these sessions, but careful measurements showed this not to be the case. An Illithid engaged in astral projection generally does so from a sealed room, whereas meditation seemed to occur in any sheltered spot. Perhaps the missing worship of deities occurs during these states, or perhaps these sessions are merely a form of rest. Whatever the case, this practice consumes a great deal of an Illithid's time.

We gathered much information from peripheral observations, from the two captures of which I have spoken, and from a few daring forays into vacant Illithid dwellings. Having mastered Ssirik Akuar's considerable natural hazards, and having operated undetected at the fringe of Illithid civilization for some time, we began the final phase of our work. Here Academician Kratanitkul's particular gifts came to the forefront: his ability to mimic the appearance of Illithids and their slave species and even to counterfeit certain Illithid abilities proved invaluable. These abilities served him well in his investigations of Underearth societies. Academician Kratanitkul and his assistants began a period of extremely close observation.

In retrospect, we had grown somewhat overconfident, perhaps pardonably so in light of our prior successes. When our

guides became aware of our new plans, they grew greatly agitated. The Monzari had become increasingly distant and unhelpful over the course of our stay, but when we refused to reconsider our course, they withdrew entirely to their tents and would say nothing further.

In the beginning, our operations were highly successful. Assistant Master Toliklos will be able to present you with four books of Illithid manufacture that cast a great deal of light on Illithid life, though they raise more questions than they answer. Much of what I have told you concerning the Illithids was supplemented or confirmed during this period. It was a time of great hope and great interest; it was, however, unfortunately brief as well. What final error Academician Kratanitkul made we will never know. I fear his end was not a pleasant one.

Fortunately, we had some warning: Academician Kratanitkul and his associates were tardy, but this was small reason for concern as the difficulties of travel on Ssirik Akuar sometimes make for long delays. More worrisome was the failure to locate them through scrying spells, but these often go awry when the subject is within or beyond a large concentration of creatures resistant to magic. Our guides' dogs, the szarkel, gave us our first clear intimation of trouble.

It was the habit of the szarkel to run about the camp unhindered. (This had been cause for considerable friction between the githzerai and our own people because of the intractability of the dogs.) The creatures did so now, but mostly at the perimeter, running back and forth, sniffing at the wind, and staring intently into the distance. Their masters stood rigidly at the entrance to their tents, as if listening. Abruptly, both dogs and githzerai entered their dwellings. During this time, the githzerai spoke not a word to one another, and refused to acknowledge our questions. When Lord Aragson would wait no longer and followed the githzerai in his desperation, he found their tents empty. We never saw them again.

The assault was sudden. Lord Aragson will give you the full account of it. It seems that the Illithids were also overconfident. While tragic, our losses were small in proportion to the losses suffered by the force that came against us. It is well that we were prepared for a sudden departure, however. When the Illithids retreated from our unexpectedly strong counterattack, we had time to make good our escape before they could gather reinforcements. So far as we can determine, we were neither pursued nor traced. Our journey homeward was as uneventful as our outward faring.

There is one matter I have left for the last, and for a purpose. You will recall that we were encamped on a ruin. There are many such on Ssirik Akuar, most of them

*Continued on page 65*

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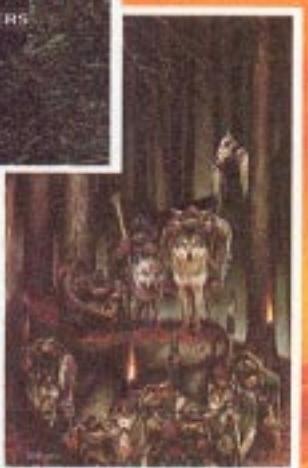
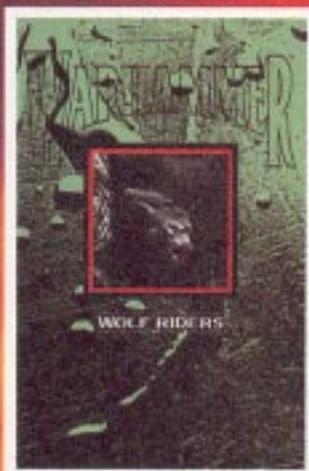
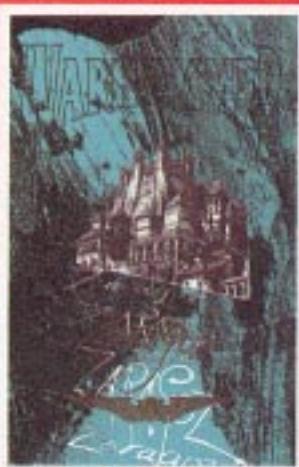
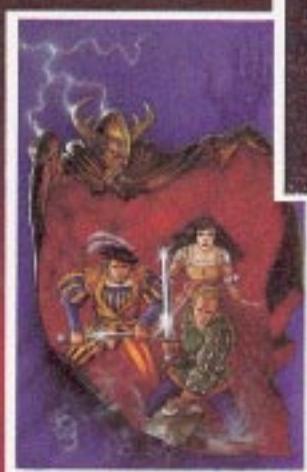
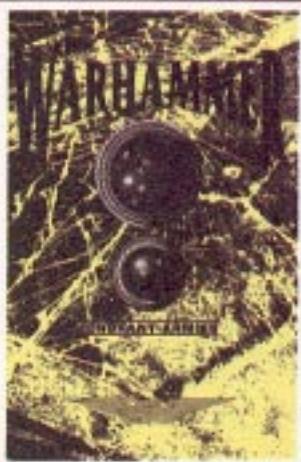
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# Fangs Alot!

The all-new (and corrected!) 2nd Edition vampire

Given that this is the Halloween issue of DRAGON® Magazine, and that the AD&D® 2nd Edition game was released this year, we felt it was appropriate to offer a special feature that combined these two events. As fate would have it, the vampire entry in the *Monstrous Compendium*, Volume 1, was produced with a serious printing error. We now offer you the corrected two-page entry on vampires, containing all-new information on the powers and habits of the most dangerous of all chaotic-evil undead.

Further information on vampires from the pages of DRAGON Magazine may be found in issue #128, in the articles "Hearts of Darkness," by Tom Moldvay, and "A Touch of Evil," by Vince Garcia. Happy haunting!

# Vampire

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (15-16)
TREASURE:	F
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	1
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl 18 (C)
HIT DICE:	8+3
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	5-10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Energy drain + 1 or better magical weapon to hit
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	M (5½'-6½')
SIZE:	Champion (16)
MORALE:	
XP VALUE:	
Western	3,000
Eastern	4,000

Of all the chaotic evil undead creatures that stalk the world, none is more dreadful than the vampire. Moving silently through the night, vampires prey upon the living without mercy or compassion. Unless deep underground, they must return to the coffins in which they pass the daylight hours, and even in the former case they must occasionally return to such to rest, for their power is renewed by contact with soil from their graves.

One aspect that makes the vampire far more fearful than many of its undead kindred is its appearance. Unlike other undead creatures, the vampire can easily pass among normal men without drawing attention to itself for, although its facial features are sharp and feral, they do not seem inhuman. In many cases, a vampire's true nature is revealed only when it attacks.

There are ways in which a vampire may be detected by the careful observer, however. Vampires cast no reflection in a glass; cast no shadows, and move in complete silence.

**Combat:** When engaging in combat, vampires are savage and fearsome opponents. They are physically very powerful, with a Strength score of 18/76, receiving a bonus of +2 to hit and +4 to damage. The crushing blows of a vampire's attack are so fierce that they inflict 5-10 points of damage.

The gaze of a vampire is one of its most powerful and dangerous weapons. Any person who allows the vampire to look into his eyes will be affected as if by a *charm person* spell. Due to the power of this enchantment, a -2 is applied to the victim's saving throw versus spell. In this manner, vampires are often able to pass posted sentries and surprise their chosen victims.

Like all undead creatures, vampires exist in both the Positive Material and Negative Material planes at the same time. Their powerful negative essence allows them to drain two life energy levels from anyone they strike. If the vampire is making use of some form of weapon in the attack, it cannot employ this power.

Weapons of less than +1 enchantment pass through vampires without harming them in any way. Even if attacked with and harmed by magical weapons, vampires regenerate 3 hit points per round. If reduced to zero hit points, a vampire is not destroyed, but is forced to assume *gaseous form*. Once in this state, it will attempt to flee and return to its coffin where, after eight hours of rest, it regains its corporeal form. If the defeated vampire is un-



Illustrations by Clyde Caldwell and Jim Holloway

able to reach its coffin within 12 turns, however, its essence breaks up and the creature is truly destroyed.

Sleep, *charm*, and *hold* spells do not affect vampires. Similarly, they are unharmed by poisons and immune to paralysis. Spells that are based on cold or electricity cause only half damage.

At will, vampires are able to disperse their bodies into clouds of elemental vapor and assume *gaseous form*. In this state, they are all but immune to attack and can escape from almost any confinement. In addition, vampires can *shape change* so as to take on the form of a large bat (hence the flying movement rate given above).

Vampires can summon lesser creatures for aid. In a subterranean environment, they will typically call forth a swarm of 10-100 rats or bats. In the case of the latter, these do not physically attack but serve to confuse and obscure the vision of the vampire's foes. In the wilderness, a vampire will normally call upon 3-18 wolves for assistance. In all cases, the summoned animals arrive in 2-12 rounds.

At will, a vampire can use a *spider climb* ability and scale sheer surfaces. Often, they will employ this power to gain access to rooms on upper floors without alerting those on watch downstairs. This power also permits the vampire to seek refuge in places which are all but beyond the reach of mortal men.

Despite the great powers which vampires obviously possess, they are not without weaknesses of their own. The odor of strong garlic repels them and they will not approach it. Further, they will recoil from the face of a mirror or lawful good holy symbol if either of these is presented to them with courage and conviction. It is important to understand, however, that this will not actually harm the vampire in any way nor drive it off. Garlic will prevent the creature from attacking or entering the area, while mirrors and holy symbols force the vampire to find some means of removing the offending object before it can be bypassed. In most cases, the vampire will seek to overcome these hazards with the aid of its minions. For example, a *charmed* person might be called upon to attack someone who is holding the vampire at bay with a holy symbol. Another important point to keep in mind is that a lawful good holy symbol will affect the vampire regardless of the vampire's original religious background. Vampires which are splashed with a vial of holy water or struck with lawful good holy symbols are burned by them, suffering 2-7 points of damage.

# Vampire

Just as vampires can be kept at bay, so too can they be slain by those who have the knowledge to do so. Any vampire which is exposed to direct sunlight is instantly rendered powerless and, after one round, utterly annihilated. If the vampire can be immersed in running water, it loses one-third of its hit points each round, until destroyed on the third round. Last, a vampire can be killed by having a wooden stake driven through its heart. In this case, however, the creature can be restored simply by removing the stake if further measures are not taken to ensure the fate of the vampire. In order for it to be completely destroyed, the vampire's head must be cut off and its mouth stuffed with holy wafers (or their equivalent).

In addition to its aversion to items like garlic and holy symbols, the vampire acts under many other limitations. One of the most powerful of these is the creature's inability to enter a home without being first invited to do so by a resident of the dwelling. This does not apply to public buildings and places of business which, by their very nature, extend an "invitation" to all. Once a vampire has been invited to enter a residence, it may come and go freely afterward. A common manner for obtaining permission to enter a home is the use of the vampire's gaze to *charm* a servant or other inhabitant.

Any human or humanoid creature slain by the life energy drain of a vampire is doomed to become a vampire himself. Thus, those who would hunt these lords of the undead must be very careful lest they find themselves condemned to a fate far worse than death. The transformation takes place one day after the burial of the creature. Those who are not actually buried, however, do not become undead and it is thus traditional that the bodies of a vampire's victims be burned or similarly destroyed. Once they become undead, the new vampire is under the complete control of its killer. If that vampire is destroyed, the controlled undead are freed from its power and become self-willed creatures.

In most cases, vampires do not lose the abilities and knowledge which they had in life when they become undead. Thus, it is possible for a vampire to have the powers of, for example, a wizard, thief, or even priest. In all cases, of course, the new vampire becomes chaotic evil.

**Habitat/Society:** Vampires live in areas of death and desolation where they will not be reminded of the lives they have left behind. Ruined castles or chapels and large cemeteries are popular lairs for them, as are sites of great tragedies or battles. Vampires often feel a strong attachment to specific areas with some morbid significance, like the grave of a suicide or the site of a murder.

When deciding on a course of action or planning a campaign, vampires move very slowly and meticulously. It is not uncommon for a vampire to undertake some scheme which may take decades or even centuries to reach its conclusion. Because of the curse of immortality that has fallen upon them, they feel that time is always on their side and will often defeat foes who might otherwise overcome them; the vampire can simply go into hiding for a few decades until the passing of the years brings down its enemies.

Vampires are normally solitary creatures. When they are found in the company of others of their kind, the group will certainly consist of a single vampire lord and a small group of vampires which it has created to do its bidding. In this way, the vampire can exert its power over a greater range without running the risk of exposing itself to attack by would-be heroes.

In general, vampires feel only contempt for the world and its inhabitants. Denied the pleasures of a true life, they have become dark and twisted creatures bent on revenge and terror. When a vampire creates another of its kind, it considers the new creature a mere tool. The minion will be sent on missions which the vampire feels may be too dangerous or unimportant for its personal

attention. If the need arises, these pawns will gladly be sacrificed to protect or further the ends of their master.

**Ecology:** The vampire has no place in the world of living creatures. It is a thing of darkness that exists only to bring about evil and chaos. Almost without exception, the vampire is feared and hated by those who dwell in the regions in which it chooses to make its home. The vampire's unnatural presence is all-pervasive and will cause dogs and similar animals to raise a cry of alarm at the presence of the creature.

Vampires sustain themselves by draining the life force from living creatures. Unless they have a specific need to create additional minions, however, they are careful to avoid killing those they attack. In cases where the death of a victim is desired, the vampire will take care to see that the body is destroyed and thus will not rise as an undead.

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# The Well-Rounded Monster Hunter

Investigators' skills in the CALL OF CTHULHU® game

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Illustration by Jeff Easley



Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® rules provide a wide range of skills for Investigators, but many more skills are possible that could broaden the knowledge of player characters. For the benefit of Investigators and Keepers alike, some new skills for this game follow, as well as some thoughts on modifying skill rolls to reflect special circumstances.

A special note is needed concerning specialty skills. A skill called Egyptology has appeared in CALL OF CTHULHU modules from Chaosium. While this skill is obviously a specialized form of Archeology, no explanation is given as to the relationship of Egyptology and Archeology in terms of game mechanics. I have attempted to remedy this with rules that define specialized versions of a wide range of skills.

### **Modifying skill rolls**

Not all tasks that require skill rolls are equally difficult. For instance, it's possible to use the Anthropology skill for both the relatively easy task of identifying someone as an ethnic Korean and the more difficult problem of identifying a member of the obscure Ahapi tribe. Similarly, picking a cheaply produced padlock and a custom-built Swiss trick lock are both Locksmithing feats, but one is obviously more difficult than the other. Situations like these occur with new skills as well as with the old. A Keeper can handle them in one of three ways.

One way is to ask for multiple skill rolls, which is logical if a task is unusually difficult because of length or complexity. This has the net effect of multiplying the skill percentage by itself one or more times. With two skill rolls, for example, someone with a 50% skill rating has a 25% chance of success, a 70% rating has a 49% chance, and 90% has an 81% chance. Probabilities for other base ratings and numbers of rolls are easily worked out with a pocket calculator.

The simplest method of adjusting skill rolls is to reduce the chance of success by some fixed amount. The Swiss lock, for example, might carry an automatic -30% modifier on any attempt to pick it. Modifiers like this will be familiar to players of many other role-playing systems.

Finally, the Keeper can reduce the chance of success by some fixed proportion by multiplying the character's chance of success by some percentage. The CALL OF CTHULHU rules already have the impaling roll for melee and the analogous special roll for skills, set at one-fifth the character's normal chance of success. The skill descriptions in the rulebook also refer to situations in which characters have only one-half of their normal chance of success. Other percentages, such as four-fifths (80%), three-fifths (60%) or one-third (33%), could be used to reflect various levels of difficulty. A calculator is necessary to use this method comfortably.

All three methods have their advantages and disadvantages. Multiple rolls favor characters with very high skill ratings. Multiplying by a fraction slightly favors

less-skilled characters (they didn't have a great chance of success originally, so they aren't losing much). Both methods leave at least a small chance of success for less-skilled characters. In contrast, subtraction modifiers essentially rule that characters with skill ratings below a certain percentage have no chance at all. I use all three methods, depending on which I think is appropriate at the time. Note that modifying a roll to show a task as unusually easy can only be done by adding to the base chance or multiplying it by some amount greater than 100%. Perhaps that tacky padlock gives +15% or  $\times 120\%$  to a lock-picker's skill.

### **Specialty skills**

A character may be an expert in a single facet of a skill, or he might apply a skill to just one field. The aforementioned Egyptology, for instance, is Archeology limited to the cultures of ancient Egypt. Analogous specialized forms of Archeology can be defined for other areas of the world: Assyriology (Mesopotamian cultures), Classical Archeology (Greece and Rome), Pre-Columbian Archeology (the New World), and so on.

Skills can have specialized forms. For example, an Anthropology specialist would be knowledgeable about the cultures of just one region of the modern world. Instead of general Mechanical Repair, a character might specialize in auto repair, gunsmithing, or setting traps. Paleontology could be a specialized version of either geology or zoology. The only limit here is the Keeper's judgment in determining what constitutes a meaningful specialty. For instance, although Paleontology would be a useful division of geology in the game, crystallography (the study of crystal shapes) or petrology (the study of rock composition, structure, and origins) probably would not. The first is too limited a part of geology, and the second is not versatile enough to be useful in the game.

Naturally, a character with a specialty skill is not totally ignorant of everything else in the "parent" skill; a master auto repairman, for instance, may never have fixed clocks or refrigerators, but he would probably do better than someone with no

experience at any sort of mechanical repair. A specialist can therefore use a specialty skill for nonspecialized tasks—but not very well. An Egyptologist who hasn't actually spent points on Archeology skill, for example, could try identifying a non-Egyptian artifact using his Egyptology skill but at a greatly reduced chance of success (say, at  $\times 25\%$ ). Of course, a character could buy both Egyptology and Archeology, but this would be rather wasteful. Specialty skills cost just as many points as regular skills, and there are no cost savings for buying multiple specialties. Certain specialty skills are meant for non-player characters, who don't need to be as versatile as Investigators.

### **New Investigator skills**

**Fine Arts Knowledge:** This measures a character's detailed knowledge of the history, techniques, and styles of the fine arts (painting, sculpture, music, architecture, literature, etc.). This skill can be taken more than once, since the full skill rating is only for one art form; e.g., a comprehensive knowledge of music does not give any greater skill at analyzing architecture. In some cases, the Keeper may relax this separation. A scholar of music might have knowledge of opera; since an opera contains both words and music, someone skilled at either art form could study an opera to learn who the unnamed author was, his mental state, what is obliquely referred to in the third act, and so on.

The most common application of this skill is in evaluating Mythos-related works of "fine" art, both ancient and modern. A character with Fine Art Knowledge could discover where and when an artifact or poem was created, what it symbolizes, the sophistication of the artist's culture, or even if the item is of "no Earthly style." Fine Art Knowledge is thus related to Archeology and Anthropology, and in some circumstances could substitute for them with a reduced chance of success. Keepers should remember that Fine Art Knowledge uses elements of an aesthetic as well as a technical perspective.

**Cryptography:** This skill measures the ability to create and break ciphers that conceal messages. This does not include codes, which are based on the arbitrary use of one word to mean another word or phrase; e.g., using "ham" to mean "arms shipment." Codes can be invented by anyone and are virtually unbreakable, but they have several disadvantages. Codes take a long time to construct, since so many substitutions are necessary. A need might arise for a word for which no code equivalent has been defined. Both sender and receiver must have code books giving the substitutions, and these books can be lost or stolen.

Ciphers, the true subject of cryptography, hide messages by rearranging or substituting words or characters according to a master plan understood by sender

and receiver. Thus, instead of several thousand code-words, sender and receiver only have to remember the plan—a much easier task. A simple example of a cipher is a sentence in which each letter is replaced by the one preceding it in the alphabet ("a" is replaced by "z"), and the result is then written in reverse. In such a cipher, "Cthulhu rises" becomes "Rdrhq tgktgsb." The message is decoded by reversing the letters, then replacing each letter with the character that follows it in the alphabet. Although ciphers are easier to use than codes, their disadvantage is that what human ingenuity can hide, human ingenuity can locate.

The initial rating for Cryptography is INT%, because nearly everyone in the Western world has been exposed to ciphers at some time during their childhood. Anyone can produce an extremely simple cipher, but such ciphers can be broken by successive Idea and Know rolls, or by a Cryptography roll at double the chance of success. Producing a difficult cipher requires a Cryptography roll at a double-normal chance of success; it's easier to make ciphers than to break them. Such a cipher takes a normal Cryptography roll to solve. If the cipher-maker's roll failed, the cipher contains a flaw. This flaw would introduce an equal chance of making the cipher impossible to solve or making it very easy to solve, using Idea and Know, or Cryptography x 2.

A cipher can be designed to be difficult to crack, imposing a modifier on the Cryptography roll needed to solve it, by applying the same modifier to the creator's skill. Someone with 40% Cryptography skill who is trying to make a -15% cipher thus has a (40% - 15% =) 25% chance of success. The Keeper may still allow double the normal chance of success when creating ciphers. (Multiple rolls don't work well here.) If the creator's roll fails, the desired modifier is lost (but he won't know it).

Cracking a cipher or determining that it is beyond one's abilities normally takes several days (Keeper's discretion on exact number). Exceptionally easy ciphers take less than a day to solve, down to a few minutes for someone with a Cryptography rating of 50% or more. Once a cipher is broken, of course, all messages in it are easily understood.

**Drafting:** This measures a character's skill at producing useful, realistic drawings, whether of machine parts or landscapes. It includes perspective drawings. Simple tools like a compass and ruler are useful but not necessary. Drafting concentrates on static form and outline. Subtly curved surfaces, textures, and suggestions of life and motion are more in the province of Painting (q.v.).

**Impersonation:** This skill enables one to convincingly masquerade as someone else. This is not merely playing a character on stage; it can be used whenever an Investigator wants to hide his true identity, emotions, or intentions. Imperson-

ation is invaluable when attempting to infiltrate a select organization or gain an enemy's trust. This can be dangerous, especially when criminals or cultists are involved.

Impersonating someone from another culture well enough to fool someone familiar with that culture requires a successful Anthropology roll as well as an Impersonation roll. This can be avoided by intensive coaching from someone familiar with the culture in question (who makes the appropriate roll instead). This process takes many days, and ad-libbing is impossible. Impersonating someone who speaks a different language may require a Speak Language roll; impersonating an electrical engineer might require an Electrical Repair roll; and so on. In some cases, these extra rolls might be modified in the character's favor; in the latter case, for instance, the character may only have to *talk* like an electrical engineer, which is easier than actually rewiring a circuit board. The character might be given double the normal chance of success of the Electrical Repair roll if talking is all that's required.

This skill may also enable one character to see through deception by others. Even if a "performance" is good enough to fool a layman, (i.e., the deceiver made his Impersonation roll), it might not be good enough to fool a fellow professional (defined as a character with an Impersonation skill of 50% or more). In this case, a resistance roll can be used. The would-be deceiver would add his Impersonation percentage to 50%, and the target would subtract his skill from that total to determine the chance that he was really fooled. Someone with high Psychology skill might be allowed a similar roll.

Some impersonations can be carried out purely through voice, posture, and acting ability. Others may require makeup, special clothing, or accessories like wigs and false noses. Lack of such disguise elements need not destroy any chance at impersonation, but Keepers will probably want to impose negative modifiers or require the character to attempt a Fast Talk roll.

**Mathematics:** This skill has little in common with Accounting. Mathematics is a science and also a branch of logic. It deals with abstract quantities manipulated according to equally abstract rules in such a way that unknown quantities or information can be derived from known ones. Branches of mathematics include geometry, algebra, calculus, number theory, group theory, and mathematical logic. Higher skill ratings indicate more penetrating knowledge of mathematical principles and more ability to solve mathematical problems. Although rulers, protractors, or more sophisticated instruments may be needed to collect data for a problem, the actual mathematical work usually requires nothing more than lots of paper, a pencil, and maybe a slide rule (or a calculator for modern-day campaigns) to

speed calculations.

Mathematics is occasionally useful in investigations because so much of Mythos magic and lore involves bizarre geometry. While neither Mathematics nor any other skill is sufficient to let an Investigator learn a Mythos spell, it could make the learning easier in some cases. For instance, a character trying to learn the highly mathematical Gate spell from a tome might be given a +1 on the tome's spell multiplier if he successfully makes a Mathematics roll. Mathematics might reveal that wall markings or a mosaic design symbolize strange multidimensional or non-Euclidean structures and relationships, providing a warning to Investigators. Finally, at the Keeper's option, a successful Mathematics roll may give an Investigator a bonus on another skill roll, such as Astronomy, Physics (see Chaosium's *Cthulhu Now* supplement), or Cryptography.

**Painting:** This skill allows a character to produce pictures by applying paint, charcoal, crayons, etc. to a flat surface such as a canvas. Success at a Painting roll means production of a fairly accurate representation of what the artist was trying to show. Although one can represent abstractions such as emotions or the Decline of the West through painting, in game contexts this skill will be more often used to create pictures of landscapes, creatures, and artifacts. Memory fades with time, after all, and not all things encountered in a Mythos investigation can be photographed. Whether anyone else will believe the paintings are of real things and not, the product of a disordered imagination is another matter.

**Philosophy:** A character using this skill can argue, more or less intelligently, in the four main branches of philosophy: metaphysics (dealing with the ultimate nature of reality), epistemology (the nature and limits of knowledge), logic (the study and practice of valid reasoning), and ethics (the study of good and evil). Such a character will also be familiar with philosophical trends of the past and present. Using this skill, a character may guess at the belief's of another person after several minutes of subtle questioning, assuming that the subject either doesn't know or doesn't care that the questioner is trying to learn something. This skill can also be used to disguise true beliefs, somewhat like Impersonation (q.v.). Philosophy can thus be used to gain the confidence of cultists, politicians, and other sinister folk, since people are more likely to trust those whom they think agree with them.

Finally, Philosophy can be used to increase SAN, although this is less effective and more dangerous than Psychoanalysis. In each week of intensive "philosophical analysis," or month of less intensive analysis, the philosopher-analyst makes a skill roll and the subject makes an Idea roll. If both succeed, the subject gains 1 point of SAN and may roll for an increase in his

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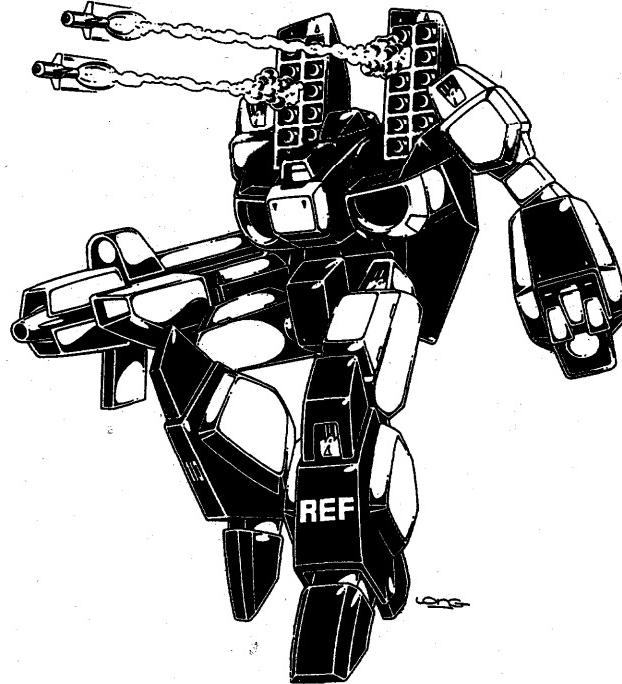
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own Philosophy skill. If the analyst makes a "special roll," the SAN increase is 1D4 points—a breakthrough. If the analyst fails his roll, however, the subject is confused and disillusioned, losing 1D2 SAN. If the subject fails the Idea roll, no SAN is gained or lost. Like psychoanalysis, philosophical analysis cannot raise a subject's SAN higher than his Luck roll. It can, however, be practiced on oneself. This is one reason why sages (master philosophers all) have such high POW and SAN: Through years of continual self-analysis, they raise their SAN to the limit set by their Luck, then trade in SAN for POW, thus raising their Luck rolls and increasing SAN.

**Play Instrument:** This skill is analogous to Sing; the higher the rating, the better the performance. The character is also able to play more difficult musical works. Some spells may call for musical accompaniment, making a Play Instrument roll necessary. Note that characters must specify which instrument they are proficient with, and each distinctly different instrumental skill must be bought separately. If two instruments are very similar, however, such as violin and viola, skill with one instrument should certainly carry over to the other.

**Sculpture:** This measures the ability to make three-dimensional images in clay, stone, wood, or other media. If a Sculpture roll succeeds, the character has accurately, recognizably portrayed the subject. Like Painting (q.v.), this skill measures only technique; artistic vision is beyond quantification.

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Mathematics	00%
Painting	05%
Philosophy	05%
Play Instrument	00%
Sculpture	05%
Any specialty	As original

## Sage *Continued from page 10*

(such as a kusari-gama in Oriental Adventures), does the character automatically gain proficiency with the weapons that correspond with each function (in this case, with chain and kama)?

The situation is analogous to that of the bastard sword described previously. Knowledge of the combination weapon does not necessarily allow use of its component weapons. The techniques required to use each of the weapons you mentioned are different. The governing principle in both of these cases is the no-free-lunch rule: You can't get two or more proficiencies for the price of one simply by selecting a multipurpose weapon.

### When do charging characters attack? What are the effects of a charge?

Charging monsters or characters may attack normally at the end of their charge; exactly when depends on the reach of the weapons being used (longer weapons attack first). The charge movement, initiative, and affects chance to hit. See the DMG, page 66, for more details on charging.

### How do high dexterity scores or a short sword of quickness affect initiative?

High dexterity never affects initiative; it affects only surprise. A short *sword of quickness* allows the wielder to attack first. This is not the same as having the initiative; a thief-acrobat (for example) cannot automatically evade each round simply because he has a *short sword of quickness*. He must win the die roll before he can evade.

### Can missile weapons, other than hurled melee weapons, be used in melee?

No, missiles cannot be fired or hurled when the firing character is in melee. Furthermore, bows and arrows are not melee weapons and cannot normally be used in hand-to-hand combat. A bow or crossbow could, however, be used for pummeling (see *Unearthed Arcana*, page 107).

### Can a character fire a missile into a melee without hitting friendly characters? If not, what is the chance of hitting an ally?

This depends on the situation. When firing into a melee, use the following procedure:

The character firing the missile declares which creature he is targeting. (Any of the character's allies who are fighting with the target creatures are potential targets for the missile.) Randomly determine which target will actually be in the path of the missile. If the figures in the melee are about the same size (e.g., human vs. human, elf vs. dwarf), there is an equal chance that either the enemy or an ally

could be the missile's actual target. If the die roll indicates that an ally will be the actual target and there are multiple allies fighting the intended target, randomly determine which ally is the actual target.

Roll the to-hit number. If the appropriate number for the target's armor class is rolled, then the target is hit whether or not the character firing the missile wanted to hit that target. If the creatures in the melee are of different sizes, the larger creatures are more likely to be hit. I suggest a two-thirds chance (1-4 on 1d61 to hit the larger target when the height difference is 2'-3' (ignore height differences of less than 2'). If the height difference is more than 3', allow the missile to hit the larger target automatically if the firer wishes; otherwise, the chance to hit the larger target is 5 in 6.

Many campaigns exempt the *magic missiles* spell from this rule. *Magic missiles* are assumed to unerringly strike their targets.

### Is it possible to use an object for nonlethal combat? How much damage would a chair or bar stool do?

Yes, you can use odd objects for nonlethal combat. The amount of damage such objects can do depends on their hardness and mass. See *Unearthed Arcana*, page 107.

### How far can objects be tossed or thrown?

The maximum range for any tossed object is 5" (a stone) or 3" (a flask of oil or a vial of holy water), as long as the object is reasonably compact. Large, bulky objects have a maximum range of 2" or less, depending on the situation.

### How do you handle gaze attacks?

A creature with a gaze weapon may use it on one opponent per round in addition to any physical attacks. If the creature is unintelligent, this will be a random opponent. Intelligent creatures may pick their victims. Any opponent who can see the creature can be subject to the attack. The opponent who is subjected to the gaze attack must save vs. petrification. Some campaigns allow opponents to avert their eyes and become immune to the gaze attack, but such opponents attack and defend at a -4 penalty, and the decision to avert the eyes must be made prior to both the initiative roll and anyone knowing where the gaze will be directed. Some DMs may rule that if an entire party is surprised, all must save against the gaze during the first surprise segment of the encounter (several party members could accidentally meet the creature's gaze during the confusion of the surprise segment).

### I seem to recall some rule about a penalty when a character makes more than one attack in a round. Is there such a rule?

We can refer to page 70 of the DMG for this answer. The reference states that a



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character may use a second weapon instead of a shield, provided that the second weapon is a dagger or hand axe. Otherwise, there is no penalty for multiple attacks.

**Is there any way to prevent a *vorpal* weapon from severing the neck if the attack roll is high enough?**

No. However, the DM might choose to introduce some kind of protective magic that would do this. Note the limitations given on page 166 of the *DMG*. The DM might choose to introduce some additional limitations; for example, it would be impossible for a human to sever a cloud giant's neck unless the giant was bent over or the human was flying or levitating.

**Will unholy water harm a paladin?**

Yes. It is created by an evil ritual and is harmful to paladins and good creatures of extraplanar origin such as devas and solars.

**Can a cleric turn undead, then attack, run away, or cast a spell in the same round? Or does he stand there for a whole round, give up shield and dexterity adjustments to armor class, and hope that the turning works?**

Turning undead is a separate activity. A cleric who turns undead may not fire missiles, melee, or cast spells in the same

round as he turns undead, although he defends normally and may be able to move (DM's option).

**The monk ability *quivering palm* does not work on creatures that are struck only by magical weapons.** Looking at the *DMG*, I see that creatures that are themselves immune to normal weapons can hit other creatures that are immune to normal weapons. Does the reverse hold true? That is to say, are those creatures that can hit creatures immune to normal weapons immune to normal weapons themselves? Specifically, are high-level barbarians immune to normal weapons and *quivering palm*?

The barbarian's ability to hit those creatures that are normally hit only by magic weapons does not protect him from non-magical weapons or a monk's quivering *palm*.

**Can a torch be used as a weapon?**

**How far can a torch be thrown?** There are some instances when it is desirable to use a torch as a secondary weapon; is this allowed?

Torches can be used as primary weapons; treat them as clubs for all purposes—even when throwing and inflicting damage, assuming that the torch is lit and

the target is not immune to fire. A torch may be used as a secondary weapon if the DM thinks the situation warrants it. Apply the "Attacks With Two Weapons" rule on page 70 of the *DMG*. If players attempt to abuse the privilege, the DM might have a character set fire to himself or his equipment. Have the torch either save vs. normal blow as thin wood, or break. The fire has a 10% chance of going out per blow.

**How long does it take to draw a weapon?**

Any weapon can be drawn in one segment (this effectively adds one segment to the weapon's speed factor). Common sense, however, dictates that a character who draws a weapon during a melee will lose initiative to a character who has already drawn his weapon, unless the character with the drawn weapon must use the segment that is required for the draw in order to close to melee range. Note that sheathing a weapon takes a bit longer; changing weapons carefully takes a full round (see *Oriental Adventures*, page 54).

**How come a low-level character gets only one attack per round? A one-minute melee round certainly allows time for several attacks, especially if the character uses a light weapon such as a dagger.**

A single melee attack in the AD&D game

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**assumes** the exchange of several blows. The player's single attack roll represents the result of a series of attacks by the character, not just a Single blow. See the *DMG*, page 61, for more details. High-level characters who are allowed multiple attacks do not actually strike more blows; their greater experience merely allows them to strike a larger percentage of *telling* blows.

*Unearthed Arcana* (page 78) says that a sap will stun an opponent if it hits him in the head when the head is uncovered. Since there are no hit location tables in the AD&D game, how do you determine if the sap hit the opponent's head?

The *DMG* has a rule that says an intelligent creature can aim a blow at an opponent's head half the time (1-3 on 1d6). While this rule (see page 46) encourages characters to wear helmets, I think it's a bit excessive. Try any of the following for adjudicating attacks with a sap:

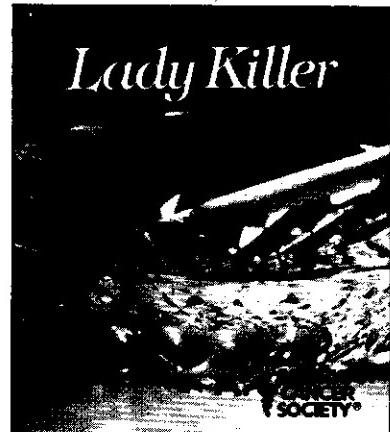
Any attack roll four or more over the minimum score needed to hit the target strikes the head. Strength bonuses don't count when determining the minimum score to hit, but bonuses for rear attacks (including a thief's back-attack bonus) and attacks on prone opponents do count.

Treat the sap as a pummeling imple-

ment, and use the rules on page 107 of *Unearthed Arcana*. The sap does no damage unless a stun is scored. It has the chance of a large and hard object to stun, and does normal sap damage (1-2) when a stun is scored. A sap is a weapon and negates the initiative penalty for pummeling attacks. Roll a 1d6 before each attack; a one indicates that the attack will strike the head if the sap hits.

The *DMG* gives a procedure on page 70 for attacking magically sleeping opponents, but what about normally sleeping opponents?

The to-hit bonus vs. normally sleeping opponents is +4.  $\Omega$



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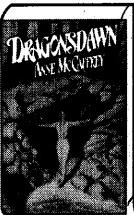
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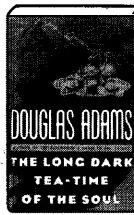
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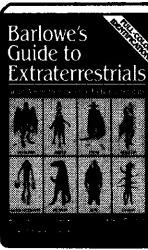
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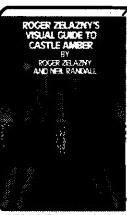
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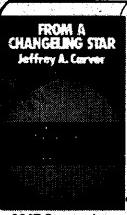
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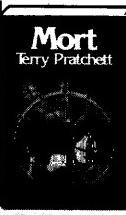
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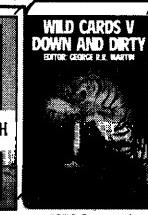
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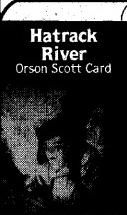
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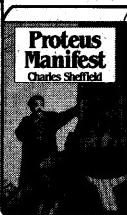
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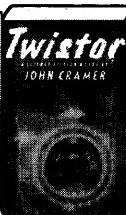
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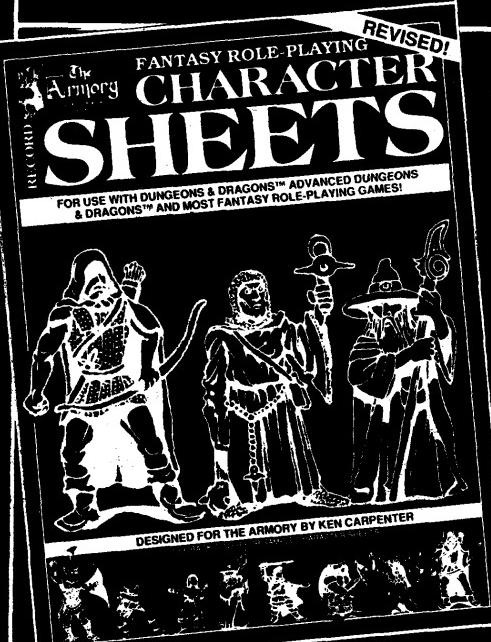
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## Forum

Continued from page 6

challenge. In the letter, however, the dragon just jumped out from behind a rock and attacked the characters; even so, the party lost one of its fighters in the example. Now if the same party had to work its way to the dragon's lair, descend through caves (a veritable dungeon in itself) filled with who knows what, then finally meet the dragon at the bottom, while following all the suggestions in that long-ago "Forum" letter, I don't think the PCs would be so casual. They would have used up most of their spells by that time, and the dragon would have attempted to kill the mage in the night, long ago. The characters would never know if one of them was subject to the dragon's charm or was actually the polymorphed dragon. They wouldn't know which of their items had been switched for cursed ones, what was in the dragon's lair, who the dragon's contacts were, or even if the dragon was there by the time they got there.

The suggestions in "Give Dragons a Fighting Chance" were good, if only one such suggestion was used on a dragon. The nonspeaking, non-magic-using dragons may be fit for lower-level characters, but if you want to use them for higher-level PCs, at least play them with the brains they have.

And if you ever do run into a dragon and kill it before it wakes up—sorry, it probably wasn't the real dragon.

Toby Myers  
Hamilton NY

The point Larry Madden makes ["Forum," issue #141] about scrolls is somewhat valid,

though I'm reluctant to make high-level spells as available as his system would dictate

Granted, nothing is more frustrating for a beginning player than sitting around watching the rest of the party bash zombies while his mage DOES NOT cast that sleep spell. Also, I would have a hard time denying scrolls to a high-charisma spell-caster, who came back to his mentor with a few bags of hard-won gold and a couple of extra first-level spells—particularly in lieu of some of the other things a character could buy with that money. For instance, 900 gp could get the first-level spells alarm, message, and magic missile for his spell book (assuming the PC doesn't blow a learn-spell roll). Then the character could use that gold to hire (again using the 1st Edition Dungeon Masters Guide) four mercenary bodyguards—a 4th-level fighter, a 3rd-level fighter, and two 1st-level fighters—when the party next goes adventuring.

But somewhere a line has to be drawn. It a game world exists in which anyone can walk into a magic shop run by a high-level mage, plunk down 2,700 gp, and get a wish scroll, you have a game world that is going out of control. Common low-level spells (except for name spells or powerful spells like sepius snake sigil) should be relatively obtainable, if the mage has the money or can provide suitable service.

Madden's magic-using shop owners are probably ex-adventurers who decided to stay alive and let others do the risk taking. Since 11th-level mages or higher can build a tower, attract a body of men, etc., and retire as nobles, we can assume the typical shop owner is no higher than 10th level. Exceptions do exist, but they show up at the DM's discretion.

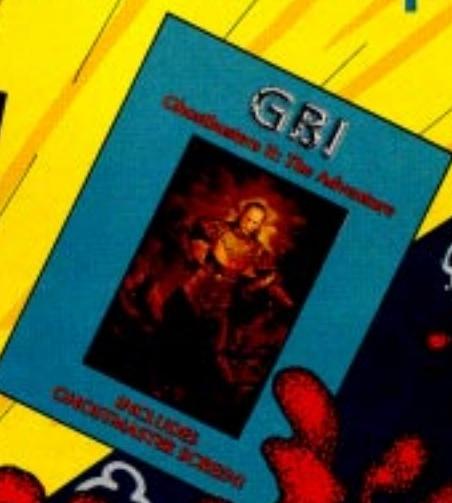
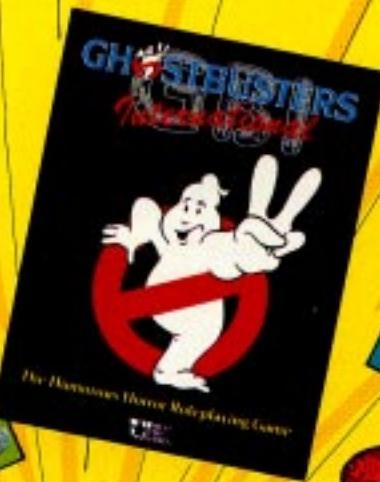
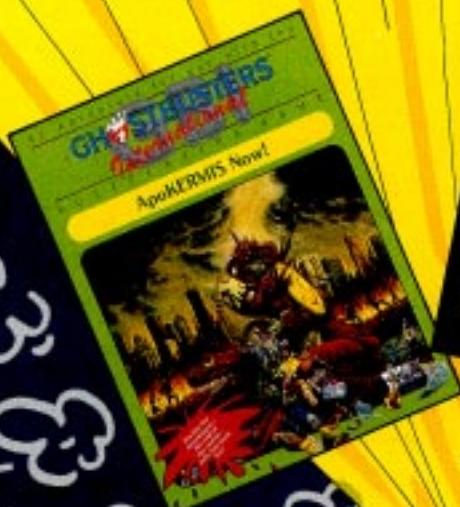
Scrolls or spells up to fifth level can be obtained, but due to the longer time to prepare higher-level scrolls and spells, such a shop would probably have only first- to third-level spells in stock, unless the owner had a great deal of spare time, or a particular fourth- or fifth-level spell was constantly required in the area—both unlikely events. Higher-level spells would have to be ordered, requiring a minimum of one day per level of each spell to complete, assuming the mage has the ingredients to make the ink for the scroll. (And that's assuming no errors are made!)

DMs are advised to keep the spell books belonging to such shop owners fairly bare and such shops distant. Players who have to go through a lot of trouble to get a single spell will be reluctant to go spell shopping without good reason. PCs, being the most aggressive characters in the area, may stock up an impressive supply of spells and items. A less aggressive NPC, even it considerably more experienced, may not accumulate as many spells. The typical magic shop should have basic spells—i.e., those you feel safe handing out to the players.

S. D. Anderson  
Whittier CA

In issue #139's "Forum," S. D. Anderson wrote about a hypothetical battle in which a single 8th-level PC fighter equipped with bracers of defense (AC 2), gauntlets of ogre power, a ring of protection + 3, a horseman's flail + 3, 75 hp, and a dexterity of 17 defeated 40 5th-level NPC fighters in chain mail and armed with scimitars. Each NPC had 32 hp, they attacked two at a time, and whenever one dropped, another took

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his place. Eriana the PC was not allowed multiple attacks or weapon specialization.

The NPCs are idiots to attack Eriana two at a time. The whole situation seems rigged in her favor. She may have no specialization bonus but neither do her enemies, and all attacks are made against her front, where she can use her dexterity bonus. In a realistic campaign, the monsters aren't going to be so kind to her.

According to page 69 of the *Dungeon Masters Guide* (under the heading "Number Of Opponents Per Figure"), a single man-size figure can be attacked by six man-size opponents at once. Three will attack her from the front, two from the flanks, and one from the rear. Eriana's -4 armor class takes a nose dive under these conditions, to AC -1 from the flanks and AC 1 from behind. Eriana will now have to kill 35 NPCs just to keep them from completely surrounding her.

Under completely average conditions, 12.5 hp damage per hit with a 95% chance of hitting will take her 94 rounds to kill all NPCs. The NPCs' scimitars average 4.5 hp damage per hit. The NPCs in front of her have a 5% chance of hitting, the ones at her flanks have a 20% chance, and the one behind her a 30% chance. Those helpless, faceless NPCs, now doing an average of 3.825 hp damage per round, will cut her to ribbons in 20 rounds. Now it is Eriana who finishes over an hour late. We can nudge the odds back in Eriana's favor by giving back her multiple attacks per round and by giving her double specialization with the horseman's flail, but even with two automatic hits each round and +12 hp damage (average 31 hp per round), she still needs 36 rounds to kill only 35 of her 40 opponents. Her effort is heroic, however, since she takes 19 of her 5th-level opponents to the grave with her.

The point is that PCs can be killed when outnumbered by lower-level opponents attacking intelligently, so giving them poison, five extra levels, or totally arbitrary to-hit bonuses is quite unnecessary. In fact, the PCs will have to use their heads or powerful magic to defeat such large groups. In the above example, Eriana will win this bout if she can put her back to a corner, but she will still take 24 hp damage.

The above is still a contrived example. Fighters of 5th-level are rare, or at least they should be. Suppose Eriana, armed as above, is fighting a small army of orcs armed with broad swords (averaging 5 hp damage on a hit). She can automatically kill two orcs per round. The three orcs in front of her inflict an average of (.05 x 5 x 3) = .75 hp damage each round. The two at her flanks deliver (.05 x 5 x 2) = .50 hp damage per round. The one behind her inflicts (.05 x 5 x 1) = .75 hp damage per round. That's a total of 2 hp damage inflicted on Eriana per round. It will take the orcs 38 rounds to kill her at that rate. Before she dies, Eriana will kill 76 orcs. Impressive, but I wouldn't single-handedly take on the orcish invasion force if I were her.

Ted Collins  
Johnson City TN

This letter is a response to S. D. Anderson's letter on Eriana in DRAGON issue #139. In my campaign, I have introduced a combat modifier to deal with situations such as the one that he describes. Whenever a character (PC or NPC) is outnumbered by opponents engaged in hand-to-hand combat with him, the following adjustments are made:

1. The outnumbered character suffers a -1 penalty to his armor class for every extra opponent that he is fighting; and

2. The opponents gain +1 bonuses to their armor classes equal to the above penalty.

Thus a character outnumbered 3 to 1 would suffer a -2 penalty to his armor class, while his opponents would gain +2 bonuses to their armor classes.

The logic behind this modifier is that a character cannot concentrate upon multiple opponents as well as he can upon a single opponent; dodging one attack may inadvertently leave him more exposed to another attack. Due to this factor, a character must concentrate more upon defense than on attack, so his opponents' armor classes improve.

Using this modifier in the combat between Eriana and the NPCs produces some interesting results. Eriana is outnumbered two to one (since only two of the NPCs are attacking her at any one time). Her armor class becomes -3, while that of the NPCs becomes 4. She now hits them only 90% of the time and so requires 134 rounds to finish them all. The NPCs now hit her 10% of the time and can kill her in 85 rounds. Even factoring in Eriana's three attacks every two rounds still requires 89 rounds for her to win. Close, but the NPCs would still be favored.

As far as specialization is concerned, remember that it is a two-way street; the NPCs could also be specialized. Assuming that Eriana is double-specialized with her flail, she is gaining two attacks per round as well as +3 to hit and damage. She can now kill an NPC every round (approximately) and thereby needs 40 rounds to finish them all. Give the NPCs single specialization with their scimitars. They now have three attacks every two rounds and gain +1 to hit and +2 on damage. Using these numbers (and the outnumbering modifier), they would kill her in about 27 rounds. Not even close.

In either of these cases, if the NPCs can surround her with more than two opponents (up to six man-size attackers can attack a single man-size figure), it would be over more quickly. There are other tactics available to the NPCs, especially using the weaponless and nonlethal combat systems as described in *Unearthed Arcana*. If the NPCs try to grapple Eriana, they gain a +2 to hit until she can break the hold. If they try to overbear her, they gain a +1 bonus to hit; should they succeed, she will be on the ground with a -2 to hit and a +4 to be hit (she should also lose her dexterity bonus). The NPCs could use this opportunity to bring more of their companions into the battle with the attendant outnumbering results. Finally, they could attempt to disarm her with their normal chances to hit. Any hit by an NPC would require Eriana to roll an 8 or better (her save vs. petrifi-

cation) or lose her grip on her weapon. Without a weapon, she would not last long.

One further factor to remember is fatigue. While Eriana's opponents are replaced by fresh men as the fight goes on, she does not get any rest. In the original example in issue #139, she fights for over two hours without any breaks. According to the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide* (page 21), she would have to roll against her constitution after the first hour and again after 50 minutes if she makes this first check. If she fails either check, she becomes fatigued and loses two points on every stat and suffers a further -2 penalty on all to-hit and damage rolls and saving throws. Furthermore, if she continues to fight while fatigued, she must roll against her revised constitution every 10 minutes to avoid exhaustion and subsequent doubling of these penalties.

Ultimately, the fact remains that fighters (indeed higher-level characters in general) can defeat an incredible number of opponents with virtually no chance of losing. The very fact that we can calculate the probable outcome of a combat ensures that this is the case. The problem is that there really isn't any random factor. The to-hit and damage rolls are random, but they do not allow for the possibility that an inferior opponent will get lucky and deal out a telling blow. As it stands, an orc would have to roll 20s every time in order to defeat even a mid-level opponent with a decent selection of magical items (and that opponent would have to roll 1s). Such luck is not even worth considering. This detracts from the game, for after a while you wonder why bother running a combat when the outcome is so one-sided.

The problem seems to stem from the huge number of hit points the average character has and from the fact that, in the AD&D® game, a character is either functioning fine with no problems (as long as he has at least 1 hp) or he is dead (or unconscious for more generous DMs). There is no point between these two poles. While this does allow for a simple, fast combat system, it does lead inexorably to the problems described by S. D. Anderson. While it is possible to make a few alterations to the system, ultimately, it needs an overhaul.

Stephen Jorgensen  
Truro, Nova Scotia

I am writing in response to S. D. Anderson's letter in issue #139. First of all, let's look at how this situation would really turn out.

Eriana of Belargin, a powerful but not-so-wise  
*Continued on page 51*

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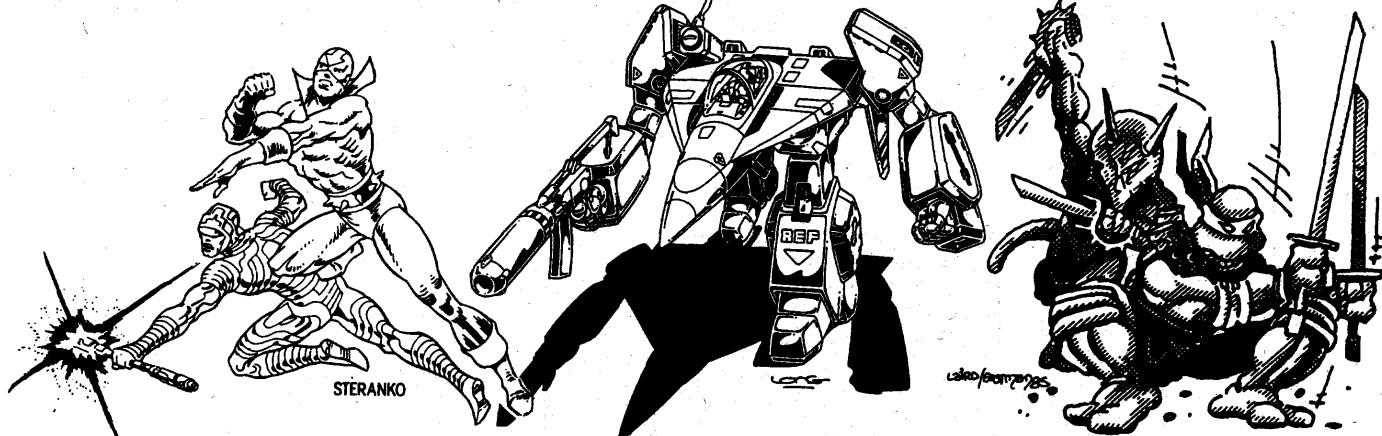
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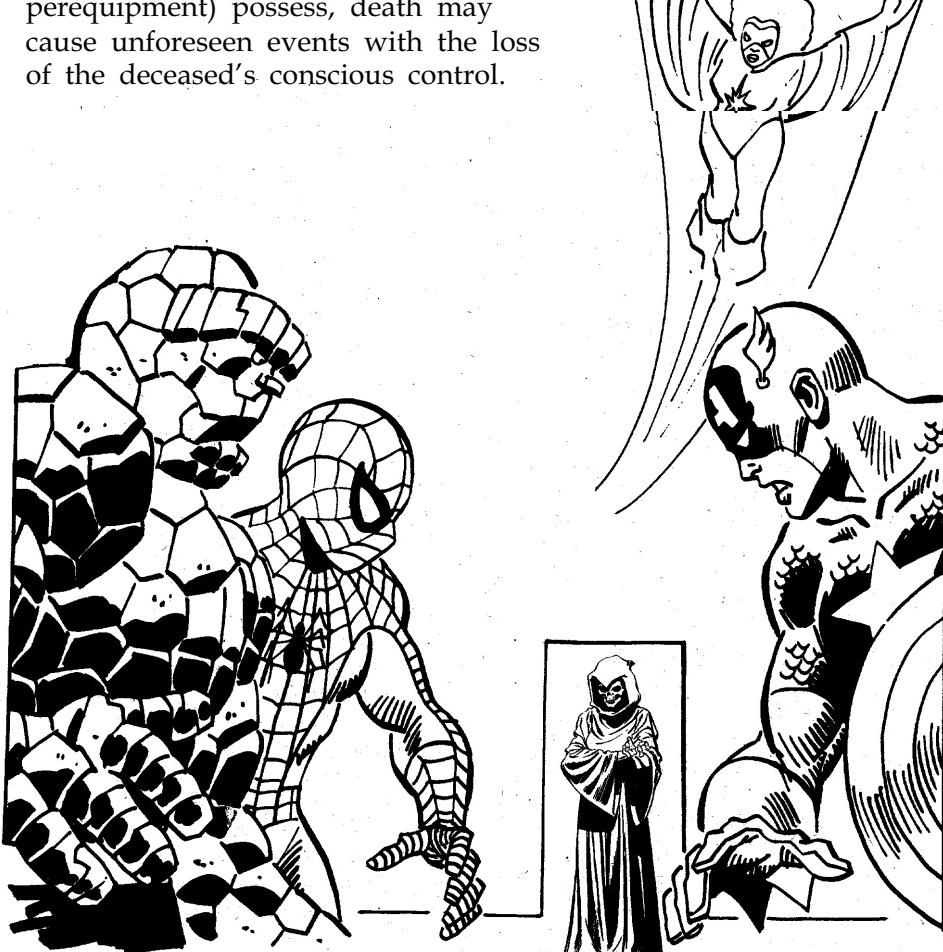
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# Nobody Lasts Forever

But Death rarely has  
the last word on superheroes

by David Edward Martin

Let's think about the unthinkable—namely, death and its effects on your hero's career in the MARVEL SUPER HEROESTM game. Death doesn't usually change people physically. Oh, they don't breathe, are no fun at parties, and have hygiene problems, but on the whole, not much else occurs to the recently departed. Superbeings are a different case. Because of the powers that some superbeings (or their superequipment) possess, death may cause unforeseen events with the loss of the deceased's conscious control.



You aren't likely to know what's going to happen to your character if he dies. Even if you do, you'll only have to deal with the aftereffects once. NPCs are a different case; they can drop like flies in tough campaigns. Judges should determine post-mortem effects beforehand, especially if the current adventure has a high risk of PC or NPC fatalities. The information should be kept secret unless later events enable someone to puzzle it out.

Since most PCs are unique individuals, post-mortem effects can be specifically selected or randomly determined for each superpowered hero as appropriate. Simply roll 1d100 on Table 1 for random results. If the character's powers are species abilities or are the results of processes used on a number of beings, one post-mortem effect should be sufficient for everyone in that group. The Judge should be prepared to decide how technologically produced superpowers are affected if the deceased equipment still operates after the death of its user or if such equipment is damaged at the time of the user's death.

## Post-mortem effects

Table 1 lists the various post-mortem effects that might occur when a superbeing dies. Of course, these effects may not apply if the superbeing was merely a normal (if athletic) human.

**PM1/Total Loss:** The body retains none of the powers possessed by the deceased and remains physically unchanged. For example, when Changeling died while impersonating Professor X, his body was locked into that form.

**PM2/Reversion:** The body retains none of its superpowers. It also reverts in death back to the deceased's original form. Werewolves are an example of this.

**PM3/Partial Loss:** The body loses some superpowers and retains others. Generally, those powers that required a conscious mind in order to operate are lost, while those powers that are a function of body structure remain. For example, a dead Armadillo would still have an armored hide and claws.

**PM4/Retention:** The body retains its superpowers, though it is, of course, unable to use them unless converted into a zombie or animated by a possessing life force. Some powers are localized in particular parts of the body. If those body parts are transplanted to another being, the recipient gains the superpowers inherent in those parts. For example, if the deceased had optical powers such as telescopic and microscopic vision, the transplanting of those eyes to another might give the recipient those powers. Such powers that remain decrease in rank as the body decays, but such decay halts if the parts are properly transplanted or stored.

**PM5/Self-Direction:** The body's powers turn upon itself. Each power releases a final, full-strength attack at the

body. This flurry of activity may destroy, transform, or otherwise alter the dead superbeing. If such self-directed attacks are of higher rank than the deceased's former Health, the body may be burned, disrupted, or even disintegrated outright. Afterward, the remains are inert and possess no remaining powers. For example, if the deceased possessed a petrifying power, the body may suddenly transform into a rock statue.

**PM6/Self-Destruction:** The body's powers turn upon itself. The deceased's power ranks are totaled and converted into a self-destructive blast of equal rank. If the blast is of higher rank than the deceased's former Health, the body is burned, disrupted, or disintegrated. For example, when the android Hyperion died, his body dissolved into protoplasm. However, no matter how destructive the blast, its effects do not extend beyond the body. The nature of the self-destruction should be characteristic of the deceased's body or powers if possible.

**PM7/Explosion:** The body's powers erupt in a single explosion as the body spontaneously detonates. The deceased's power ranks are added together and converted into a single explosion of equal rank. For propriety's sake, let's assume that organic beings completely disintegrate with little mess. Robots, cyborgs, and inorganic parts become shrapnel. If the deceased was sufficiently powerful, his death could mean the demolition of large parts of the countryside or even the planet. Again, the nature of the destruction should be characteristic of the deceased's body or powers.

**PM8/New Power:** For reasons unknown, the death trauma causes the deceased's existing powers to transform into a new power. The power is selected at random and may have nothing to do with the previously existing powers. The body emits this new power uncontrollably, much like a isotope emitting radiation. The body is not immune to this power; if the new power is destructive, the body soon disintegrates and the power ceases to function. However, if the power is useful or even valuable, the deceased may become a valued commodity. In the rare event that this new power somehow negates death, the character rises like Lazarus from the tomb.

### A question of resurrection

In comic books and their role-playing systems, death is reversible. Beside its obvious effect on the character, what effects does revival have on his powers? The answer is: *any* effect. It depends on what killed the being the first time, what happened to the body, and how revival occurred. The Judge should decide which of the following states applies.

Physical resurrection occurs when the body is returned to at least minimal Health and a life force is restored or developed. If the body is restored to the same condition

it had during its superpowered phase, such powers most likely reappear.

If the body is restored to a pre-super state (for example, a dead Thing being revived as a mid-20s Ben Grimm), such powers might not reappear. Of course, the potential for later development of powers remains (the revived Ben would still have his potential for mutation). Mental powers may reappear if they were a function of the physical structure of the brain or if the original life force returns.

If the deceased is cloned, you must consider whether the deceased's powers were genetic in nature. If the powers were not genetic, the clone is assumed to be the same as the deceased's pre-super form. If they were a function of the deceased's genetic code, the clone may be physically the same as the superbeing's original superbody. Powers that were based on later mutation or modification are not necessarily present in the clone, but the potential is there for recreation of those missing powers. For example, a clone of Ben Grimm would be human, but exposure to gamma radiation might make the clone orange, rocky, and superstrong. If the clone is possessed by the original's life force, mental or magical powers will probably reappear, although the clone may have initial difficulty in using familiar powers in an unfamiliar body.

Sometimes conditions transplant the deceased's life force into a new body. These "body transplants" give the hybrid a combination of the life force's mental or magical powers and the body's physical powers. For example, Walter Langkowski (formerly the orange-furred, male Sasquatch) was restored to life in the white-furred Sasquatch form that was once Snowbird's body. Langkowski thus retained the ability to transform between the white Sasquatch form and a human body, but that body was Narya's female form. (Fortunately, that little oversight has since been corrected.)

### Resurrection as remodeling

Resurrection is a handy way to alter or redefine a superbeing's powers. Superpowers result from a complex interaction between a life force, a physical body, and (perhaps) external forces. Death, even as a temporary state, alters the equation. Players and Judges should agree on the overall effect the resurrection will have on a superbeing's powers. Examples include:

- Retain the same powers but generate new ranks for them;
- Trade randomly selected powers for new powers;
- Throw out all powers and generate new ones;
- Alter the ranks of a randomly selected number of Physical Abilities;
- Keep only mental and magical powers (if this is a new body);
- Keep only physical powers (if this is a new life force);

- Combine old powers into new hybrid forms;
- Add powers resulting from the means used to resurrect the deceased (for example, bionic implants to maintain the restored life force may possess additional abilities).

### Immortality and longevity

Now that you're depressed, let's deal with powers that help your PC avoid that unknown country from which few explorers return.

**P21/Immortality:** The *Players' Book of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Advanced Set* deals with this power. However, you might want to know a few details, such as how old your pet immortal appears (Table

**Table 1**  
**Post-Mortem Effects for Superbeings**

1d100 Post-mortem effect	
01-25	PM1/Total Loss
26-54	PM2/Reversion
55-69	PM3/Partial Loss
70-84	PM4/Retention
85-91	PM5/Self-Direction
92-95	PM6/Self-Destruction
96-98	PM7/Explosion
99-00	PM8/New Power

**Table 2**  
**Apparent Ages of Long-Lived or Immortal Superbeings**

1d100 Apparent age (years)	
01-07	Baby (under 2)
08-14	Child (2-11)
15-29	Teen (12-19)
30-58	Young adult (20-40)
59-80	Middle age (41-60)
81-94	old (61-80)
95-00	Very old (81+)

2) and how old that being actually is (Table 3). Later, we'll also consider what happens if an immortal becomes mortal.

**P22/Longevity:** Adam Sonfield, a MARVEL SUPER HEROES game player, reminded me that a greatly increased lifespan is not necessarily the same as Immortality. Longevity does not automatically include immunity to disease, aging, or bodily destruction, and someone with Longevity merely has a greatly increased—but finite—lifespan.

When creating a character with this power, you need to determine both the actual age of the PC (Table 2) and his apparent age (Table 3). In the case of the recently born (those under 100 years old), the apparent age should be middle age or younger; otherwise, how would you know the hero was long-lived?

The total lifespan of someone with Longevity is determined by his power rank. The power rank number is cubed, then

multiplied by 70 years (current average human life expectancy) to generate the probable lifespan of the being in question (see Table 4). For beings with other lifespans, multiply the modifier in Table 4 by the lifespan common to that race. For example, a field mouse with Typical Longevity could reach an age of 216 years.

In such cases where the actual age of a hero is greater than his expected lifespan, assume the character was either affected by a process or event that further increased his lifespan (for example, being a time traveler) or that he is aware that his remaining days are few in number. In either case, this extension can lead to all sorts of plot complications. Is the character trying to complete a final task before dying? Is he trying to do something to prevent death and renew his as-yet-unexplained extension?

Remember that a long life expectancy includes no guarantee of actually living that long. PCs are still prey to accidents. For example, consider the case of a mad scientist who, having just completed a process that gives him a potential lifespan of thousands of years, promptly trips on a power cord and dies of a fractured skull.

A character's Longevity rank can be added to his Endurance rank when deter-

**Normal life:** Character is now a normal individual of his apparent age with a normal life expectancy. If the power can be later restored before a natural death occurs, he continues living on as if little had happened. If death occurs meanwhile, an immortal might still resurrect himself if the power is restored to his remains.

**Sudden aging:** The character rapidly ages to his true age but doesn't necessarily die. A character whose age exceeds his mining the effects of disease on a long-lived PC. If the Longevity rank is higher than the Endurance number, it can also be used to determine the character's rate of healing.

The player should also determine the character's aging rate. Does he age in a steady but incredibly slow rate? Does he suddenly gain a year's worth of aging once each century? Although this information might have little game use, the information will help flesh out your PC's long life story or give motivation to long-lived NPCs' machinations.

### Quick exits

But what happens to an immortal or long-lived character if that power is removed or negated? Roll 1d100 on Table 5 for the answer.

normal life expectancy withers to a mummylike state. If his age exceeds four times his normal life expectancy, the mummy is apparently lifeless. Consciousness remains, though, and the "mummy" is free to use its other powers as best it can. If the Longevity or Immortality power is later restored, the character might regain his previous appearance, depending on the circumstances and the Judge's discretion.

**Aging and death:** The character rapidly ages to his true age. The shock tends to be fatal, especially if the character's actual age is more than twice that of his normal life expectancy. Rapid decomposition occurs in 1-100 turns; the remains attain a state similar to that of a normal body the same age as the recently deceased's actual

**Table 5**  
**Aftereffects For Loss of Longevity/Immortality**

**1d100 Effect**

01-40	Normal life
41-60	Sudden aging
61-00	Aging and death

age. Bodies under 4,000 years old are mummified; those up to 10,000 years old become skeletons, and those older than that collapse into dust. If the power is restored to an immortal's remains, the immortal can eventually return to life (traditional vampires are an example of this). Longevity-powered characters require aid from such powers as Resurrection or Self-Revival before they can regain their previous physical conditions. Ω

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**Table 3**  
**Actual Ages of Immortal or Long-Lived Superbeings**

<b>1d100 Actual age (in years)</b>	<b>Birth era</b>
01-06 Under 100	Modern industrial era
07-39 100-500	Post-Renaissance
40-67 501-1,500	Dark Ages
68-79 1501-4000	Classical period
80-88 4001-10,000	Ancient, post-Ice Age
89-94 10,001-100,000	Cro-Magnon, Ice Age
95-97 100,001-10,000,000	Primitive man
98-99 10 million-5 billion	Various prehistoric eras
00 5 billion +	Before Earth was created

**Table 4**  
**Life Expectancies of Long-Lived Superbeings**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Modifier</b>	<b>Life expectancy (years)</b>
FE (2)	8	560
PR (4)	64	4,480
Ty (6)	216	15,120
GD (10)	1,000	70,000
EX (20)	8,000	560,000
RM (30)	27,000	1,890,000
IN (40)	64,000	4,480,000
AM (50)	125,000	8,750,000
MN (75)	421,875	29,531,250
UN (100)	1,000,000	70,000,000
Shift X (150)	3,375,000	236,250,000
Shift Y (200)	8 million	560 million
Shift Z (500)	125 million	8.75 billion
C1000	1 billion	70 billion
C3000	27 billion	1.890 trillion
C5000	125 billion	8.750 trillion

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adventurer, passes the castle of the evil Lord Badguy. A patrol of Lord Badguy's elite henchmen (40 in all) sees her. Eriana uses her wisdom of 4 and decides to attack the henchmen. There would be no rules for this bout. In the AD&D game, combat happens in the dungeon or wilderness, not in a ring. To recreate this fight properly, we must consider several things.

First, let's give back Eriana's 3/2 attack rate. We'll use the rules from the 1st Edition *Players Handbook* and the 1st Edition *DMG*, so forget about weapon specialization for now.

Second, consider the experience of the faceless NPCs; this is where things really start to go wrong. Do you think these people got the 18,000 + xp of 5th-level fighters by guarding a castle? Come on! My bet is that many of these fighters were retainers or former adventurers. If Eriana is of 8th level and has *bracelets of defense (AC 2)*, *gauntlets of ogre power*, a *ring of protection +3*, and a *horseman's flail +3*, you might think that someone only three levels lower might have at least one magical item.

Also, who says that these fighters have no to-hit or damage bonuses? These people are 5th-level fighters, not peasants! I bet that many of them have strengths that produce to-hit or damage bonuses.

And finally, who says the NPCs can only face Eriana two at a time? If Eriana is in a dungeon or the wilderness, 40 NPCs could swamp her. They can attack from the front, sides, and rear. Assuming 10 NPCs could get at her at once, that's 10 attacks per round. Compared to Eriana's previous 3/2 attack rate, I would now say she is in trouble.

Now we'll run this combat again, using most of the calculations used by S. D. Anderson. Eriana needs 127 swings to kill all the NPCs. With her 3/2 attack, rate it will still take her 84 rounds to kill all of our faceless NPCs. One NPC needs 340 swings to get the 17 hits he will need to kill Eriana. But now with 10 NPCs facing her at once, they need only 34 rounds to take her down!

Low and behold! Before Eriana can kill half of our NPC friends, she is dead! And this is without giving some of the NPCs magic items, strength bonuses, bonuses from attacking from behind, etc., etc. Not even giving Eriana weapon specialization can save her this time.

What's the moral of this story, Eriana? The next time you foolishly attack 40 NPCs, bring along the rest of your party. Then maybe it will be a fair fight.

Tom Footit  
Kanata, Ontario

I read with interest the articles on cheating in issue #144, and I thought you might like to know how I deal with some of those problems in my campaign.

First, I will discuss cheating when rolling ability scores for a new character. As a DM, one of the first AD&D game rules I ever took issue with was the experience-point bonus system. Why should a character who already has it easy with high ability scores be rewarded for successful adventuring with extra experience points? This ruling simply widens the ability gap (through quicker advancement) between characters. I told my players to add up their characters' ability scores and subtract that sum from 90. A negative value is a percentage penalty, a positive value is a percentage bonus. I then told them to arrive at the scores any way they pleased. They could roll numbers and design a character based on the result, or they could

design the numbers based on the character they wished to create—end of problem and the beginning of some great role-playing fun.

Second, I will discuss cheating while playing. I have a simple rule: Play however you like, and cheat if you like, but no one can do anything that will spoil the fun of other players (or you're out of the group). I point out to the players that cheating against the game is like cheating in solitaire—who are you cheating? No one is allowed to take issue with another player who is suspected of cheating. As a result, one of two things happens: The cheater quits in disgust when no one seems to care whether he cheats or not (if I haven't already had to ask him to leave) or he sees the point and starts to enjoy the game as it is meant to be played.

If one or more players are familiar with the module we are about to play (I have always used commercial modules strung together by an overall story line in my campaign), I alter it as though it had already been visited once in the past and is now repopulated and redecorated (with new traps). The characters who have been here before can then "remember" anything they like and can advise the party accordingly.

As often as possible, I ask the players to roll certain dice without first telling them why they are doing that or whether they should want a high number or a low (though they always ask). If honesty in a particular roll is crucial to the success of an adventure, I roll it myself.

Though there are honest mistakes made (and I make about half of them), the players usually pick them up without much bickering, and everyone seems to have a good time.

Dennis Rudolph  
Prince George, British Columbia

Most of the letters in "Forum" deal with people who regularly play their favorite RPG with a group of friends. This makes it easy to forget the number of people, like myself, who find RPGs very interesting but for one reason or another can only seldom, if at all, play an actual tabletop game.

Before I go much further, I need to explain two of the ways in which people play RPGs. Some people enjoy being with friends and playing a game with endless horizons. They do not bother with particulars such as spell durations. Others play with friends and have a similar attitude, but the DM is familiar with and uses all rules, and the player is and does likewise. This is the type of play normally seen at conventions. I'm not saying one style is right or wrong, but I enjoy amassing books and other literature on the AD&D game, and with all the reading I do in place of playing, I have become a strict follower of the latter example.

I do know several people who regularly get together and play a few rounds of the AD&D game, but their DM doesn't even keep track of time in the campaign! I also enjoy play-by-mail games (PBMs) and computer RPGs (written about in issue #145's editorial) that can be substitutes for those not in a group. While certainly fun, I disagree that computer RPGs can replace a campaign in which each character is controlled by a different person.

I would also like to mention Michael Townsend's letter in "Forum" issue #145, in which he says he did not have many friends in high school because he was bussed to a handicapped-accessible school. He spent many hours in its library reading fantasy and science-fiction books as an escape from loneliness. I am not physically handicapped, but manic depression and extreme shyness have kept me from making many

friends. Reading AD&D game materials has helped me escape from loneliness, too.

Matt Foster  
Wichita KS

I am writing to comment on S. R. Oldson's "Forum" letter in issue #146. I have been a DM for only three years, but I certainly see his point. When I first began playing the D&D game, my players and I really enjoyed gaming. Recently, however, we've gotten tired of the more sophisticated modules in which the characters must solve some mystery or prevent some civil war.

Mr. Oldson's call for a "long, challenging, dungeoneering game that requires player intuition as well as knee-deep, blood-and-gore fighting" is well justified. Besides, how many players and DMs want to see DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games become PAYROLLS & POLITICS with the fighters, clerics, thieves, and mages replaced by ambassadors, lawyers, district attorneys, and IRS agents?

In my opinion, a good D&D adventure involves a deep, dark dungeon or other mysterious, forgotten area with a theme like "clear the swamps of the foul lizardmen" or "delve into the ancient drow city and retrieve the Talisman of Light before they destroy it!" Granted, all hack-and-slash adventures would get dull before long. Those who desire these types of modules need to play arcade games in which all you need do is kill. Modules should be balanced with the right amount of fighting and the right amount of thinking. (Oldson's example of module S1 *The Tomb of Horrors* is excellent, as the module was well written.)

Please keep what I have said in mind when writing modules. I would also like to encourage others who support the ideas expressed by Mr. Oldson and myself to write to "Forum" in order to state their opinions and encourage module writers to design more modules of this nature.

Lee Loftis  
Greenville SC

With all the talk about changing the AD&D game rules so that magic-users can have more power and clerics can use edged weapons, one thing has never been considered: How will these rules work in your campaign?

The campaign I am in would make most players shudder. Rules (ones that are written in the book) are freely tossed aside to accommodate whims of the DM. (Actually, we have several DMs, but what was stated still applies.) For instance, lycanthropy is not a curse. Some players pursue it because they know it gives their characters greater prowess, and the negative aspects are easily done away with. Some DMs have very powerful NPCs who can provide lycanthropy and the control of that power to a player. These NPCs will do it with a minimum of whining from the PC. The result is a character able to assume animal form at will and a character immune to nonmagical or silver weapons. (One person started a PC as a lycanthrope at 1st level.)

Monster PCs are common; dragons, minotaurs, minor deities, and others exist and flourish. Reincarnation into a new (and usually more powerful) form is common, but some reincarnations start at 1st level. (How they go into a tavern without everyone else leaving or attacking is beyond me.)

A variant spell system exists for both clerics and magic-users. NPC classes presented in DRAGON Magazine are widely used, and so are

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he miles had lost their numbering quite a ways back for Fordan and his beast. He found himself wishing for company, something rare for him, when he came upon Bowren. The village was small by the standards of the day, no more than a handful of dwellings set back into the hills and kept from sight by the stacks of greenwood that dotted the countryside. Fordan saw its smokelines first and followed their scattered trails along the sky until he reached their earthbound source.

There was no one about as he led his horse down the single cut path that served as the village's road. His ears soon picked up the reason why. A chorus of voices all lifted in song came from the single large building in the area, a squat, wide-sloped hall with wooden steps that sat squarely in the center of the village. Fordan listened to the voices, frowning at the piteous tone to their chant. He turned his beast toward the nearest dwelling and dismounted with a great swing that brought a loud protest from his legs.

He knocked at the hardwood door. The noise brought no reply, so he settled down to wait, taking in the village with his eyes as he continued to listen to the chanting coming from the hall.

There wasn't much to see. The land surrounding the village seemed rich—rich enough to support crops that would have fed many more homes than this. What fields he could see in the distance were not particularly well tended. A threadbare patch of soft corn battled with encroaching wild-weed that no one had bothered to root out. A number of thresh and heartgrass fields were visible. They were sparsely kept and sickly looking.

Fordan wondered if perhaps blight had struck this place. That meant work for him, for he carried cures to the local types in the pouches slung across his horse's back. Blights were good trade for him. They brought a high price to cure these days, though he did not particularly care for the havoc they wreaked on the countryside. No matter. If there was blight here then he would end it, for a fee that would not heavily strain the resources of the village.

He was watering his animal when the chanting stopped. It died down so evenly that he was unaware of it, and so the inhabitants of Bowren saw him before he saw them. He was not an impressive sight, a diminutive man with straight brown hair that fell to his shoulders, with a thin but neatly cut suit of cloth covering his broad frame.

A stiff breeze coming from the low fields caught the cloak that hung on his back, spreading it full to reveal the craft emblem drawn there. A few of the villagers looked to his horse and saw the pouches and sacks with which he worked his magic. His hands they now saw as firm and practiced, and when he at last turned to face them, they caught the look of power that lay behind his eyes.

Fordan had never felt the need to put fear into people. His calling did that well enough. Any man in his right mind looked with care upon a sorcerer.

One of the villagers, an elder with the history of his lifetime plain on his face, approached him while the others divided to their homes. Fordan studied the man before

# The Serpent of Aledorn

by John P. Buentello

Illustrations by Janet Auliso

him, noting his speech and manner, and wondered at the peculiar oath he was made to swear by.

"Do you pledge upon the wrath of Aledorn's Serpent that you are a righteous and good sorcerer?" the elder man asked.

Fordan was well acquainted with the latter part of the oath. Simple minds tended to separate what was human from a sorcerer, and thus invest in him either good or evil. He'd given up trying to explain the many shades between the two long ago.

"I am righteous enough," he said, "and so swear by your god." He did not notice the angry look that temporarily swept the other's face. It was a mistake he would not have made in his younger years. "I offer my services to you."

The villager nodded once, scratching at the shade of beard at his chin. "I am Tarah, elder of Bowren. Your services are welcomed here, sorcerer. I pray that they are up to the task."

"I stand behind the results," Fordan replied. "I do the job I'm paid for, nothing more or less. What I ask will depend on what I have to do. If the blight is great—"

"There is no blight," Tarah replied.

Fordan looked to the fields again, his interest piqued. Surely these people did not mean to starve themselves purposely? He'd seen no roads that they could have used to bring food into the village, and even these great woods could not hold enough game to support them.

"Come, sorcerer," Tarah said, taking his arm. "Others will see to your animal. There are no other villages for miles, so you must have come a great way. We will eat and rest for a time."

The idea sounded none too bad to him, but he eyed the men who came at the elder's bidding to take the reins from his hand. "Take care with those brews," he told them sternly. "See that you don't open them accidentally. The light may spoil their power, or worse."

The men nodded, backing a bit from the animal. He watched as their eyes strayed to his cache of supplies. Nothing there could harm them in its present raw state, but he preferred that no one be tempted to ransack his things.

Tarah's home was a large, one-room dwelling that possessed but a single window. The roof had been raised to allow a small loft to be constructed. From that loft he heard the sound of children's voices. He did not have to guess at the subject of their discussion. Tarah's wife, a small woman even to him, said little and stayed near her place at the fire while Tarah sat and ate with him.

The food, a thick stew which surprisingly held much flavor, explained little about the villagers' problem. There were a number of vegetables, though not many, and chunks of meat he guessed to be rabbit. From the way Tarah devoured it, Fordan guessed that it was not their usual fare. A religious meal perhaps, to be eaten after the services they had attended. He finished it silently and did not ask for more.

Tarah asked him many questions, perhaps to keep him from asking any of his own. Fordan gave only the answers he wished known. The elder seemed to know much of sorcerers. He talked in a manner that indicated he knew a

wizard's power lay in his potions and not in his mouth.

"Perhaps you can be of help to us," the elder finally said, looking to his empty bowl.

"Perhaps, but I do not do favors for the asking. How would you pay me?"

The other man smiled, but it was a brutish thing that did not fit his face. "We will pay what you ask. There is money enough among us. It is well hidden and protected from discovery."

It was Fordan's turn to smile. At least the elder hadn't lost all his superstitions about sorcerers. "I work for my money. Before I can do so, however, I must know what there is to be done. You say there is no blight?"

Tarah shook his head. "No. If a blight of those horrible monsters was upon us, then Bowren would no longer exist."

"What horrible monsters?"

"Have you heard of other sorcerers in these parts?" Tarah asked. "Of a man called Aledorn?"

"I've never traveled this way. He is unknown to me."

"Well that he should be," Tarah replied. "He was put into the ground by good people some time ago, but not before he cursed all those who had brought him to his death."

"How did he die?" Fordan was not interested in hearing about the curse, for if it was mere superstition that the villagers now fought, then he was out of luck. There were sorcerers who would chant away a curse and leave others behind believing themselves saved, and poorer for it. He had never chosen that particular path. Better to deal with the here and now and leave the afterworld to the charlatans.

"We killed him," Tarah said flatly. Fordan looked to his eyes and saw that the man spoke the truth. He did not look sorry for it, nor did he turn his gaze from the sorcerer. He took a single drink from the water flask that lay next to him on the table and swallowed. "There was just cause for it."

"There must have been, for you to take such a chance," Fordan answered. "Was it he who brought the trouble to your village?"

"After a time, yes. Aledorn appeared among us one day, looking for work he could perform. He showed us how he could make it easier for us to live by the power of his potions and brews. We asked what he wanted from us in return, and he told us that he was seeking a new home. His old one had lost faith in him. Since he was useful, we allowed him to stay. It would have been better for us if we had forced him to go."

Fordan nodded. He had yet to find a people who felt comfortable living beside a man who could cure your worst illness or end your life in the space of a heartbeat. As a rule, he had found people feared that which helped them the most.

"Aledorn was good to his word for a time," Tarah went on. "He cured our ills and made the crops grow. He promised to care for us in return for our faith in him, but even this proved to be a lie. Our fields began to turn, more from neglect than anything else, for he forbade us to work unless the signs seemed right."

"Finally we asked him to go. He would not, so we forced him out. Even then he returned, demanding that we obey him. It was after we had driven him off the sec-

ond time that the serpent appeared."

Fordan kept silent, watching the elder as the memories played across his face. "Could this creature have come naturally from this place?"

Tarah shook his head, his eyes growing hard. "It is a fearful thing. A beast from another realm. It served Aledorn's bidding. It was too large to kill. We tried anyway, each time losing more men. It ate up our fields, destroyed our crops, and preyed on those it could catch."

"Why didn't you offer to pay the sorcerer to remove it?"

Tarah's expression showed what he thought of such a notion. "One night Aledorn returned, perhaps to ask us for just such a payment. We caught him near the edge of the village. The serpent was not with him. We killed him and burned what remained."

"And the serpent?"

"We thought it would vanish after we had destroyed Aledorn, but we were wrong. It's still out there somewhere. It doesn't attack the village directly any longer, but it still destroys the fields. We dare not allow the children to go far." Tarah's expression turned hard with anger. "Our village is dying."

Fordan sat and brooded about the serpent. His thoughts brought him nothing of use. A sorcerer's brews could do many things, and while he had a notion of what it was Aledorn had actually done, he would have to see for himself to be sure. Even then he wasn't certain there was anything he could do.

"Do you know where this serpent dwells?"

"It appears around dusk," Tarah said. "Before that, it seems to stay somewhere in the woods. After it takes its fill of our fields, it disappears again. None of us have dared to follow it."

"I will wait until dusk then, and see what I can do."

Fordan rose from his place and excused himself, stepping outside to draw a fresh breath into his lungs. Even with the open window, Tarah's home carried a dark, oppressing air to it. He couldn't see how people managed such an existence. Better to be out on the open road where at least you had land and sky, and a good horse to take you anywhere the roads turned.

He checked to see that his animal had been properly bedded, watching the villagers as they went about their business. He kept his mind from Aledorn and his serpent. It would be best for him to see the creature with as little forethought as possible. He didn't need his mind cluttered while he worked on a way to destroy it.

The day's riding eventually began to tell on him, and Tarah gave him a spot in his dwelling to rest. The elder's wife handed him a coarse blanket and left him. Fordan slept without dreaming. When he felt the hand on his arm, he came awake immediately. The inside of the dwelling had grown darker, and Tarah's shadowed form loomed above him.

"Come," he said. "The serpent has been spotted in the southern fields."

They joined a group of men outside. Tarah led them to a small ridge that marked the village boundary. Beyond the ridge, a path had been cut that led down to the fields. The dry breeze of the day had whipped itself into a cold wind, and Fordan found himself shivering despite the

heavy garments he wore.

The sounds of the serpent met them first. As he made his way down the path, Fordan listened to the cry below. It was a dry, sucking sound of flesh against flesh. When it grew loud enough to indicate that its source was directly in front of them, they stopped. Tarah took Fordan out a few paces to the edge of the fields, pointing into the withered rows of grain.

The overgrown grass and towering woods made seeing difficult. He could just make out a dark form moving among the rows in the field. His eyes finally adjusted to the gloom, and he saw the creature plainly for the first time. All thoughts of the cold left him.

It was a huge thing, a beast as surely as Tarah had called it. The sight of it raised a deep fear within Fordan. He felt the desire to flee, to leave such a monster far behind him. He held his ground and watched, taking note of every possible detail of importance as his trade had trained him to do.

It was not a serpent, although its sheer size would have caused anyone seeing it to call the monster by that name. Its head, if that was what it truly was, lay at the far end of the field. He could see it consuming entire stalks of grain through a great slit of a mouth wide enough to swallow a small calf whole.

The creature's body took up the entire length of the field. Fordan saw the bloated line of its form undulate in the grass. The fading light caught the curve of each ring that formed the segments of its body. There was a sheen to it that he knew to be slime, and when the light fell upon it, the reflections mirrored the fear of the men around him.

"Your Aledorn chose carefully when he created his serpent," he said slowly. He began to take a mental inventory of the supplies he carried. Although not trained in such practices, he'd heard of sorcerers who were able to greatly increase the size of a living being. It had probably been relatively simple for Aledorn to put together a potion that would make a worm grow to such proportions.

"Can you kill it?" Tarah asked, his tone suddenly anxious.

Fordan considered for a moment longer, then nodded. It would not be an easy thing, especially if Aledorn had gone to the extra trouble of protecting the creature from normal forms of attack. Tarah's account of the attempts to kill it seemed to confirm that he had.

"Yes, I can kill it."

Behind him, he heard a single reflexive sigh escape from the lips of the other men. Tarah looked to them, drawing their silence, then turned back to Fordan. "Do it then. Kill Aledorn's murderous serpent."

"I can do it. You may have my word on it. But first we must agree on a payment."

"What do you ask?"

"Fifty coins."

A few of the men began to object angrily. Tarah made a single motion, and others silenced them quickly. The elder nodded and put out his hand. "Agreed."

Fordan took the hand firmly in his own. "I will have to be paid first."

"What if you fail to destroy the serpent?"

"I will return the fifty coins and be on my way."

Tarah said nothing, fingering his beard in the darkness. "The killing must be done first. After that we will pay you. That is how it must be."

Fordan saw no use in arguing the point. The villagers had been betrayed by a sorcerer once. It was natural that they would not so easily place their trust in another. Besides, there were ways that he could insure his payment.

"Agreed."

They watched the serpent until it got dark enough for torches. Fordan asked Tarah to lead him back to the village. Behind him, he could still hear the thrashings of the creature. Its dull scent seemed to hang forever in the air before him.

Fordan took his time unloading his animal. He waited until Tarah and the other villagers had disappeared into their dwellings before he unpacked the vials and jars he'd carefully paddled into the horse's packs.

He chose only what he thought he would need, carefully repacking the rest. From one pouch he took a handful of a strawlike plant and gave it to his animal. The weed did not do much beside allow the beast to regain some lost strength, but they both had been journeying long, and it made sense to be able to leave swiftly if the need arose.

Tarah did not move from his place on the floor when Fordan re-entered the cottage. Fordan sat on the blanket provided for him, feeling the cold comfort of the ground beneath. He commanded his mind to relax, waiting for the feeling that would tell him he was ready to begin. When it came, he began to mix and grind the powders he carried. If he was watched, he was not aware of it.

Long after the bulk of night had passed, he laid his pestle aside and covered the pair of flasks he had prepared. He closed his eyes, savoring the darkness, and slept. Somewhere just at the edge of his hearing, he could still make out the sounds of the great serpent prowling in the darkness.

Tarah and the rest of the village men were waiting when he arose. He left the dwelling, the morning light stinging his eyes, and greeted their stares by holding up the pair of flasks before them.

"These should do the job," he said, wishing now that he had not robbed himself of extra sleep. "There are specific steps that must be taken if the potions are to work properly."

Tarah nodded. "What must be done?"

"You must get the serpent to swallow them both."

Tarah's eyes grew perceptibly wider. "How are we supposed to do this?"

"Take the potions and give them to two of your hens. Stake them out in the low fields. The serpent will do the rest."

"What will the potions do?" one of the villagers asked.

"The first will remove any magic that Aledorn has placed upon the creature," Fordan said, fingering the flask. "The second will paralyze the serpent soon after it has eaten it. I pray that the serpent does not require that his prey be moving, for the hen will be stilled soon after you force this into it."

Tarah looked at the two vials, his face as expressionless as always. "Then the serpent will die?"

"No. You must destroy it after it becomes dormant. It must be done in a prescribed way, so that the cursed crea-

ture will truly die."

"How must we kill it?"

Fordan shook his head. "First let us see if the potions do their work."

They waited until midday, when they were sure that the serpent was gone from the fields for the day. Tarah took two of his own hens and gave them to the sorcerer. Fordan forced the potions into them with practiced hands. Within moments, one of the hens became still. Fordan checked to see if it was still living. He gave each animal a sign of blessing and announced them ready.

Two men chosen by Tarah took the hens into the low fields and staked them there. The serpent had gone in the early light, leaving behind only a remnant of the southern field. Fordan watched from the ridge. After the task was accomplished, he left to repack his brews and load a fresh cache of supplies onto his animal's back.

Dusk came before Fordan was aware of it, and only when he saw the villagers gathering near the low ridge did he realize that the time had come to see if his potions would do their work. He caught up with the others, watching his footing in the flickering darkness, and followed them to the edge of the ridge.

The great serpent was already feeding. It consumed more in a single mouthful than a man could in a week. Fordan watched as its massive head moved from side to side, pushing through hard ground and brush without effort.

At the near edge of the lowest field, the one conscious hen sensed the creature's presence and began thrashing against the rope tied to it. The movements were almost imperceptible, compared to the serpent's wild motions, but as Fordan watched, the serpent began to move forward, drawing close. Its speed was so great that it reached the hens in seconds. Fordan felt himself grow colder in the darkness as he watched it swallow them both without stopping.

A few of the villagers began to step down the ridge toward the fields. Picks, shovels, and sharpened blades appeared in their hands. Fordan held them back, watching the serpent as it continued to feed. There seemed no change in the quick movements along the great body. The creature's size gave it strength even against his potions. Fordan knew it would take time. He told the villagers to be patient.

That time came later in the night. In the grey light of the moon, he saw the serpent begin to slow. The great body seemed to become suddenly sluggish. The head continued to thrust forward, weaving snakelike through the tall grass. The great maw opened once, revealing the bloodied blackness beneath, before the head slowly lowered itself to the field floor.

"Now, sorcerer," Tarah said, a large cutting blade in his own hands, "what must we do so that it will die?"

"I would like to be paid," Fordan said.

"After we have destroyed the serpent."

Fordan shook his head. "I will tell you the method after I am paid."

He stared into the eyes of the elder, seeing the hatred that had been growing there since he had first entered the village. Fordan had thought long on the village's plight during the previous night. It had occurred to him that a

people once betrayed by a sorcerer would have a neverending hatred toward them all.

"You will tell us how to kill it," Tarah said. He gripped the handle of his blade so it caught fire in the moonlight. "Tell us if you wish to go on living."

"I would be interested in hearing more about Aledorn," Fordan said without fear in his voice. "Perhaps he did betray your people, perhaps not. I find it hard to believe that he was as evil as you say. He could not have become a sorcerer without work and discipline. He would have needed the aid of another of his kind. We're usually more careful about whom we allow to learn our trade."

"You will tell us," Tarah repeated, "or we will kill you and take our chances with the serpent."

Fordan looked around to see the villagers gathered around him. Anger and fear flashed in their faces. He looked at the weapons they now held tightly in their hands. Such weapons would kill a man as easily as they would a serpent.

"Take your sharpest blades and go down to the serpent," he said slowly, watching the others about him. "You must sever it across the width of its body, and do so many times over. You must take each piece of flesh and bury it deep, and say a prayer of holiness over it to remove the curse. Only after this is done will the creature remain dead."

Tarah took a step forward. "If you lie, we will give you to the serpent."

Fordan kept his own voice even. "I gave you my word. The creature will be destroyed. Then I must be paid, for I wish to leave."

Tarah said nothing. He turned from him to lead the others into the field. Fordan watched while they worked. The moonlight gave strong shadows to the figures as they carried their bits of burden from the fields to be buried. He watched until they had carried off the last piece before he went back to the village.

He had his beast watered and ready when the elders came back from the fields. Dawn was drowning the last shadows of night, and their dirty, smeared forms were a contrast to the others gathered to hear the news. A number of the elders stopped to quiet the growing crowd. Others led by Tarah crossed the center of the village to where Fordan waited.

"You must go now," Tarah told him.

"I intend to do that," Fordan said, facing them, "as soon as I am paid."

"We have no money. You must go."

"You gave your word that I would be paid in return for killing the serpent. I have done that."

Tarah shook his head. "You have done only what is right. A sorcerer placed the serpent among us, and now one has taken it away. You have repaid Aledorn's debt."

"I owe you no debt. Aledorn did what he did for his own reasons. I'm beginning to see why he might have

done so. Pay me."

"If you do not leave now, you will die here."

Fordan looked amused. "I am a sorcerer."

"Sorcerers die like other men," Tarah said. He looked back to the others. "We have proved that before."

Fordan nodded slowly. "So you have. I wonder if there was a reason for Aledorn choosing a serpent to be placed among you. A sign, perhaps?"

"Leave us or die." Tarah's voice had become hard and angry. He drew a blade stained in dark blood.

Fordan got on his horse without another word and rode off, leaving the village of Bowren and its people behind. He did not stop riding until the surrounding countryside had lost its familiarity once more. There was a long journey ahead of him before he would feel safe from this place.

He followed a slow-moving stream until it took him down beyond the far side of the mountains. There he dismounted and settled down on the soft grass next to the bank. Low in the eastern sky he saw the stilted plumes of hearth fires. Somewhere in the valley there would be a village where he could find work. He would be careful this time to demand payment first.

The sun was low over the hills when the boys came from the shadows of the trees. Fordan watched as they settled along the bank in groups of two and three. A few of them were carrying poles for fishing. Others carried sacks from which they pulled handfuls of wriggling bait. One of the older boys broke away from the others and came to sit next to Fordan. His skin was as dark as the surrounding woods. Fordan guessed he was from the village in the valley.

"Have you ridden far?" the boy asked. He watched the others pulling fish from the stream.

"Far enough," Fordan answered. He noticed the sack the boy held and reached for one of the worms that still lay moving.

"As natural a food for fish as fish are for you," he told the boy, "but difficult to find at times."

The boy smiled. "Sometimes we can't. Then we use raw meat. The fish prefer the worms."

Fordan took a knife from his belt. As the boy watched, he sliced the worm into several parts across its width. "Strange creature, this. It has the power of life from death. Use only a portion of your bait. Slice the other as I have done and throw it away into the woods. Each part will grow into a new worm itself, and you will not lack for luring fish to you."

The boy looked at him with rare innocence in his eyes. "What kind of magical creature is this?"

Fordan smiled. "Not magical at all. A common creature."

"And each one will grow another from its parts?"

Fordan looked at the writhing sections of the worm in his hand and nodded. "Wait and see. Soon you'll be overrun by them."

Ω

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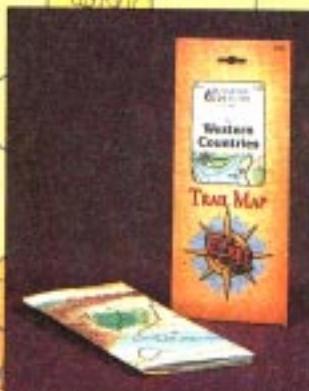
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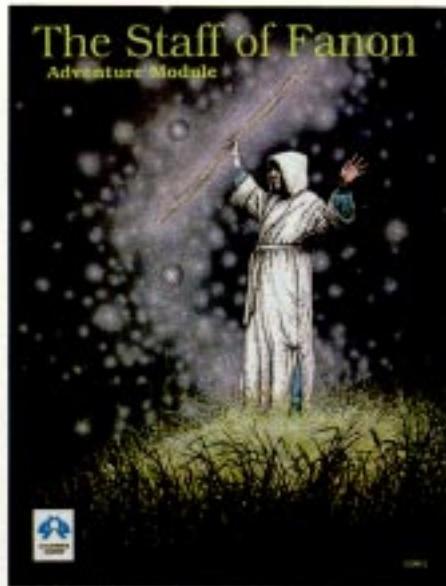
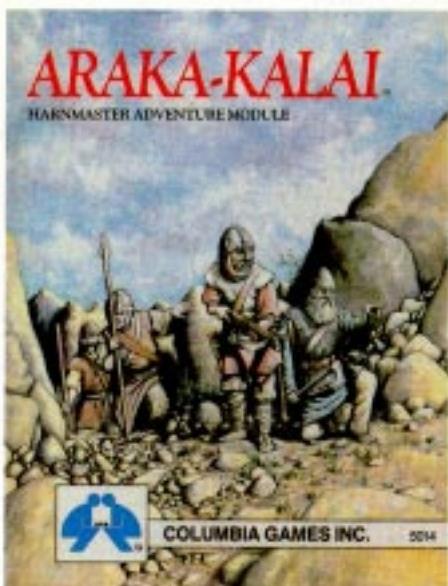
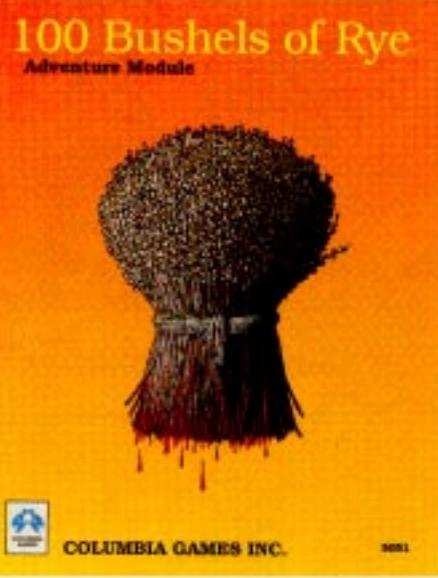
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# Role-playing Reviews

In search of adventures

©1989 by Ken Rolston

In 1983, I bought my first HARN™ campaign supplement, called *Harn* (now known as *Harnworld*). The back cover blurb unblushingly proclaimed, "STATE OF THE ART the most detailed, logical, comprehensive, and consistent fantasy world yet published; an authentic 'medieval' environment of unsurpassed quality, specifically designed for fantasy gaming." In 1983, that was a pretty bold claim against competition like Glorantha and Middle-earth, but nonetheless a fair and arguable assertion.

Ironically, and to the everlasting honor of Columbia Games, the claims of that blurb are probably more justified today than they were in 1983. On its self-proclaimed terms—a comprehensive, logical, authentic "medieval" fantasy campaign setting—even *Harn*'s earliest supple-

ments are state of the art when compared with campaign supplements for TSR's D&D® and AD&D® games, I.C.E.'s MERP™ and ROLEMASTER™ games, Chaosium's RUNEQUEST® and PENDRAGON games, Games Workshop's WARHAMMER™ FANTASY ROLEPLAY, and other classic FRP systems. Only the KING ARTHUR PENDRAGON game might rightfully challenge *Harn*'s preeminence here, with its unique mechanics for introducing models of feudal economics as integral elements of campaign play, and with its rich blend of Arthurian lore and medieval history. *Harn*, in return might fairly boast of its epic scale and original concept.

For years, my major reservation about *Harn* was the absence of published examples of adventures in the *Harn* campaign setting. This omission was perceived as a

virtue by Columbia Games, apparently in reaction to narrowly "programmed" adventure modules that lead GMs and players by the nose through a narrative, thereby constraining the GM's creativity. I have a personal bias against obsessive development of a setting to the exclusion of development of narrative and theme, probably as a reaction against the type of "game master" who labors for years on detailed maps and encyclopedias of his campaigns, yet who never runs games there, always protesting, "But it's not quite ready yet." After four years of *Harn* campaign supplements without a published example of an adventure, I had concluded that the Columbia Games folks weren't interested in publishing an adventure, and I lost interest in them.

With all the hoopla in the last few years

over the DRAGONLANCE® campaign, the D&D Gazetteers, the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting, and other FRP campaign supplement series, I managed to overlook the first Harn adventure, *Araka-Kalai*, published in 1987, and other subsequent Harn adventures. I confess to being easily distracted by noise and excitement. In this, even as a reviewer, I suspect I am in close sympathy with my audience. With no ads in role-playing magazines, no excitement from retailers, and no anticipated releases at conventions, Harn had simply slipped from my mind.

But as a critic, I can make no excuses for overlooking Harn. As the following reviews will attest, Harn has made a very special contribution to role-playing GM's support material. The graphics are excellent, with color maps, abundant diagrams of locations and buildings, and appropriate, expressive illustrations of scenes, characters, and creatures. The style of presentation is clear and detailed, and is dry with an occasional droll impulse. It is well organized for reading and reference. And the campaign materials—well, they're voluminous, historically and socially plausible, and full of dramatic fantasy adventure and thematic hooks.

In general, Harn materials are sophisticated and demanding of the reader and the gamer. They aren't really appropriate for heroic fantasy (that is, lots of swinging axes, blasts of magical fire, and account ledgers of loot and experience points), though the locations, characters, and narrative themes are adaptable to such role-playing. Ideally, Harn is for dedicated, educated, mature gamers with an appreciation of culture, politics, and history, and with high standards for logic, coherence, and realism in their fantasy adventuring.

### *Araka-Kalai*

FRP adventure supplement for the  
HARNMASTER game  
26-page softbound book and four pages of  
predesigned player characters  
Columbia Games \$16.00  
**Design:** Edwin King, Dave Kowan, Richard  
Porter, Eric Hotz, N. Robin Crosby

The central concept of this adventure setting/scenario pack is truly grand. It's the doorstep of a god-on-earth's dwelling place. Beneath the Pit of Araka-Kalai, a sinkhole filled with a bizarre organic sludge, lies the caverns where, according to legend, the god Ilvir, Spawner of Monsters, conceives the unique, grotesque creatures that are sacred to him. From all over Harn, visitors come to honor Ilvir at this site. A monastery has been founded here to worship the god and to shelter pilgrims. Atop a black plug of marble, an island in the center of the sludge-filled sinkhole, sits the ruined tower of Ilvir. Beneath this island is an uncharted wilder-

ness of caverns occupied by strange creatures, abandoned shrines, and lost cults. Ultimately, in the lowest ranges of the caverns, dwells the god himself.

The choice of a limestone karst region for the setting is geologically apt, with sinkholes and caverns galore. The history of the waxing and waning of a major cult shrine, and the accounts of the communities and doctrinal squabbles of the cult factions, are plausible, effective, motivational contexts for scenarios.

The adventures themselves are really little more than scenario outlines, though one or two provide enough detail to qualify as complete adventures. However, with the sort of sophisticated gaming Harn encourages, a scenario outline is usually sufficient, with character development and role-playing occupying the bulk of session time. Further, the maps and diagrams of locations and dwellings are detailed enough to be used for travel and strategic problem-solving.

To some degree, *Araka-Kalai* is a transitional phase in the development of a Harn adventure pack, in that most of the background and setting detail is still extraneous to the scenario outlines. The background material is rich and interesting in its own right, and it provides a perfect opportunity for a GM to improvise his own adventures. But only one of the seven scenario outlines exploits the Pit of Ilvir, the caverns beneath, and the cult shrine background. The other six scenario outlines are clearly integrated into the setting but do not specifically exploit the numerous pages of history and location diagrams and keys that make up the bulk of the supplement.

This is apparently an intentional design feature. The supplement introduction states that the designers want to provide enough detail so GMs can begin play with a minimum of preparatory work, but not so much detail that the GM is locked into a rigid path. (Incidentally, Harn materials do require a minimum of GM study, compared with most other supplements, because of their lean, clean organization and writing and the excellent layout and graphics.) "The philosophy of Harn has always been to provide an intelligent, cohesive background that does not stifle the GM's creativity." The irony is that Columbia Games may unintentionally underestimate the GM's natural and cheerful irreverence for FRP supplements. I suspect that the GM's instinctive impulse to creativity is stimulated, not suppressed, by an abundance of details, particularly when it provides a challenging and inspiring example of excellence.

However, the important thing about the seven scenario outlines is that they give a clear idea of the kinds of stories that might be expected to unfold in a Harn setting. One, a short mission to scout the outpost of an unusually successful and well-organized orc tribe, is a refreshingly plausible and interesting development of

barbaric orc culture. Another, apparently a simple rescue mission, involves a skillful reverse of expectations and poses a subtle problem-solving test for the players.

**Evaluation:** This first Harn adventure is more distinguished as a campaign setting than as an adventure supplement. Caverns inhabited by the God of Monsters are an inspired setting for fantasy adventuring, and the locations and history of the region are detailed and well developed. However, the virtues of the scenario outlines are their lean simplicity and the realistic personalities and motivations of the important NPCs. As such, this is a highly recommended campaign setting, and a strongly recommended adventure setting.

### *100 Bushels of Rye*

FRP adventure supplement for the  
HARNMASTER game  
28-page softbound book  
Columbia Games \$10.00  
Design: Garry Hamlin, Randolph Strommen, Eric Hotz, Tom Dalglish

This is the first example of a pure adventure module for Harn, and it is excellent. It's a perfect short adventure in a series of brief episodes, featuring a simple narrative focus, plenty of detail for each episode, challenging problem-solving (only a fraction of which involves combat), and the appealing narrative virtues of mystery, surprise, and discovery. The presentation is visual and concrete, well presented, and uses a page layout ideal for quick reference during the session. Diagrams, maps, and illustrations are abundant, easy to read and reference, and pertinent rather than decorative. The entire supplement is short, simple, and clear enough to read and understand in less than an hour. Though the adventure is actually rather linear (the path from the beginning to the location where the adventure is resolved is fairly obvious and inevitable), the resolution of the conflict is open-ended, with a minimum of narrative rigging.

The episode locations are nicely presented. Three in particular (the manorial village where the adventure begins, the lair of a monster, and the mines and workshop of a dwarf smith) are exceptionally detailed and plausible, each with well-delineated and well-motivated protagonists, antagonists, and informants. The background details are conveniently limited to those things necessary to running the adventure. (For a GM with little time to read and abstract pertinent details out of oceans of interesting but irrelevant geographical, social, historical, and political material, this is a refreshing change from Harn's conventional deluge of campaign background text.)

The focus of the setting feels authentically medieval. The village is based on historical documents describing medieval village life in England. Physical descriptions offer realistic details. For example,

the peasant huts have no more furniture than a trestle table and a couple of stools or benches, reinforced oaken doors are covered with a black, brittle substance (tar as a preservative), and important villagers are listed with an account of their most important holdings: number of acres worked, and number of cows, sheep, and pigs owned.

**Evaluation:** *100 Bushels of Rye* is a very effective fantasy adventure scenario in an authentic medieval setting. Though it would probably work best with HARNMASTER rules, it would work equally well for other medieval fantasy systems, particularly for systems with little PC magic, like the WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY and PENDRAGON games, or for beginning characters in more heroic systems like the, AD&D game. As an example of a medieval manorial village for fantasy role-playing, and as an example of a simple, well-designed, short FRP scenario, *100 Bushels of Rye* is highly recommended.

#### *The Staff of Fanon*

FRP adventure supplement for the HARN-

MASTER game

28-page softbound book

Columbia Games

\$10.00

Design: N. Robin Crosby, Eric Hotz, Scott McKay

While *100 Bushels of Rye* is an excellent

example of a low-level, realistic, medieval role-playing adventure, *The Staff of Fanon* is a skillfully presented, imaginative example of a high-fantasy adventure with inter-world gateways, powerful sorcery, ancient races, marvelous beings, and fantastic labyrinthine dwellings chock-a-block with magical traps and treasures and nasty daemonic entities.

Sounds a little bit like a traditional FRP dungeon? Well, it is, but it's a fairly interesting dungeon and is smoothly integrated with the more realistic, gritty fantasy of the Harn campaign. Most important, it looks like fun both to run and to play.

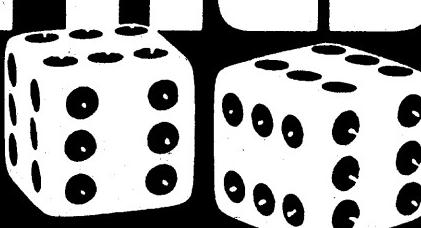
The presentation is clearer and more readable than the conventional dungeon adventure format. Layouts are oriented to single or twin pages, making reference and backtracking during study a breeze. The diagrams are clear and detailed, using Harn's clever and unique legend and key system, by which, for example, one can quickly judge the height of the ceiling or the rise of a dais from the floor. The illustrations are eloquent and appropriate, reducing reliance on wordy descriptions, and they are excellent guides to the tone and feel of the adventure. The text is lean and explicit, without the clumsy blather of conventional game-speak (or, more simply, weak writing and cursory editing) that plagues most game supplements. The organization and use of prominent section

heads facilitates review.

In general, while most FRP adventure supplements equate bulk of text with value for money, *The Staff of Fanon* keeps text to a minimum. And while most adventure supplements feature numerous encounters sketchily developed (with little more than a brief description of the setting and characters, often with wads of game stats), *The Staff of Fanon* takes a relatively short, simple series of encounters and develops them more fully, not simply by adding more text, but by effectively blending graphics and text into a coherent presentation.

The adventure itself is quite appealing. For the GM, the themes and settings suggest enigmatic, oblique references to epic currents of history. For the players, these references will be perceived only as interesting but mysterious details encountered along the way toward the resolution of the conflict. Much of what the players see they will not understand, which is as it should be in high fantasy. The object they seek is a minor feature of a vast and incomprehensible landscape of obscure artifacts and structures. Players should be bewildered and mystified, but not skeptically, as with most dungeons that are a melange of bizarre but unrelated widgets, monsters, and special effects with little context or coherence. The GM knows the background and purpose of the setting's

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features, and he can explicitly or implicitly reassure the players that, though things seem strange, they do make sense, if only the players had the GM's information.

The problem-solving is not game-system oriented. Though the magical effects are specified in terms of the HARNMASTER magic system, the characters will most likely perceive them as special, peculiar enchantments. Most of the problems are focused on the practical challenges of exploring an arcane and unfamiliar location, while searching for the object of their quest. Only three beings are cited with game stats, and none of these need be fought to complete the quest.

*The Staff of Fanon* is the first in a proposed series of three linked adventures, and publication of the second or third adventures are not scheduled for the immediate future. The adventure is fine as a stand-alone, but many campaign GMs would rightly prefer to have all three in hand before they begin. Further, a fair amount of the detail of this adventure relates to the later adventures, and the lack of an explanation of some of these details in this adventure is a bit frustrating. Nonetheless, the adventure itself is pleasing enough to deflect my concern with this minor fault.

**Evaluation:** *The Staff of Fanon* is an especially fine, short, high-fantasy adventure, easily adapted to any multiverse

fantasy campaign. In content and presentation, it is first-class, and it is guaranteed to satisfy fussy and sophisticated FRP GMs and players.

Concerning the price of *100 Bushels of Rye* and *The Staff of Fanon*: Folks who balk at paying \$10 for 28-page adventures when they can get 96 pages for \$9 are missing the point. Quality, not quantity, is the issue here.

Harn game products are available from Columbia Games Inc., Box 581, 810 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V5C 4C9; or Box 8006, Blaine WA 98230, U.S.A.

**The Broken Covenant of Calebais**  
FRP adventure supplement for the ARS  
MAGICA game  
44-page softbound book  
Lion Rampant \$7.95  
*Design:* Jonathan Tweet and Mark  
Rein-Hagen

In DRAGON issue #147, I enthusiastically reviewed the ARS MAGICA game, a system and campaign setting featuring an elaborate development of magic and magicians in a historical medieval context. *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*, the first published adventure for that game, is a persuasive example of how the ARS MAGICA system can produce a first-class fantasy adventure with a spotlight on wizards and sorcery.

Many years ago, a covenant (a wizard's commune, complete with staff and mercenary guards) mysteriously sealed itself off from the outside world and from the other covenants of the Order of Hermes. The magi have assumed that misfortune fell upon the covenant, but no one has penetrated the sorcerous illusions guarding the fallen covenant. When a missing clue to the nature of the protective wards was discovered, an expedition to investigate was organized. The adventurers and scholars will search the ruins of the Broken Covenant for an explanation to the covenant's downfall, and they may find its priceless libraries and magical treasures intact and salvageable.

*The Broken Covenant* is an adventure with an explicit and developed theme: leadership and the art of governing. Such an explicit treatment of theme in an RPG scenario is perhaps a touch pedantic, but it is based in a sound understanding of dramatic mechanics. The designers exhort the reader to raise their hobby to the standard of art, to elevate play to a greater level of emotional impact. I wince a bit at such rhetoric, but this earnest focus of the adventure's action is part of *The Broken Covenant's* distinctive coherence and effectiveness as a scenario. *The Broken Covenant* is also peculiar in its explicit notice that if the GM and players are uncomfortable with violence, the scenario may be



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successfully completed with little or no resort to violent tactics. This is odd stuff to encounter in an introduction to a role-playing adventure, but it certainly raised my expectations. The designers clearly were reaching for something more than a run-of-the-mill FRP adventure.

Fortunately, the scenario is not only earnest but imaginative, challenging, mysterious fun. The setting itself, a wizard's commune struck by catastrophe, bedecked with the traps, treasures, and mysteries associated with the plot, is exploration role-playing on an epic scale. As usual in a suspense/mystery/explore-the-unknown role-playing adventure, I can't publicly praise the material in detail without spoiling things for the players. However, for the prospective storyguide, I can mention a few general features that are especially well handled. The on-the-road-to-the-dungeon encounter is a charming, well-paced warm-up to the rest of the adventure. The riddle is elaborate, satisfying, and solvable, with GM play-on-through directions for those who, like me, hate RPG riddles; this one, though, I could foist upon my gaming associates with a clear conscience. The minor antagonists are adorable, bush league, and numerous, and are provided with a complete microculture and survival rationale. The NPC motivations, tactics, trappings, and role-playing presentation hints are comprehensive, readable, and set up for easy reference. There is plenty of treasure, but not in the traditional D&D-game sense of loot and orc-baking magical widgetry. Here, the treasure is that of the detective, archaeologist, and explorer: strange and mysterious scenes, events, and artifacts that may be only interesting curiosities or may provide clues to the mystery of the fallen covenant. The final resolution is suitably epic and ghoulish, worthy of the lesser challenges and problems that the characters encounter along the way.

**Evaluation:** *The Broken Covenant* pleased me enormously; my recommendation is unreserved. The FRP adventure crop of late has been depressingly unexceptional; against such weak competition, *The Broken Covenant* easily distinguishes itself. How does it rate against the Harn adventures, or my other Hall-of-Fame favorites like *Ravenloft*, *The Grey Knight*, *Shadows over Bögenhafen*, the classic RUNEQUEST scenario packs, and the Companion's Islandian Campaign series? Unfortunately, when compared with the Harn materials, *The Broken Covenant* is a bit awkward. The graphics are weak; the wrap-up is a bit abrupt; and the writing, materials, maps, and organization are somewhat less than polished. But for original tone and flavor, general effect, and ambitious aspiration, it's a thoroughly satisfying adventure.

My only quandary is whether I should introduce my gaming group to the ARS MAGICA system in order to take greatest advantage of the scenario's features, or

whether I should adapt *The Broken Covenant* to our house campaign rules. Standard melee combat plays a small part in the scenario, so adaptation of NPC and creature stats is only a minor problem. However, *The Broken Covenant* is best suited for the flexible resources of ARS MAGICA game magic, though a squad of midlevel D&D game spell-casters or SJG's GURPS® Magic game characters with a wide distribution of spells might manage the investigative and tactical magic necessary to cope with the scenario's challenges.

*The Broken Covenant* is available from Lion Rampant, P.O. Box 621, Northfield MN 55057, U.S.A.

#### Flight 13

Adventure supplement for the GURPS Horror or GURPS Space games  
64-page softbound book  
Steve Jackson Games \$8.95

**Design:** W. G. Armintrout

Here's an adorable bug-eyed-monster, Fifties-style, science-fiction adventure in which mad scientists from beyond the stars capture some humans and subject them to scientific tests. These tests look suspiciously like television action-adventure episodes to those of us not trained in science. As usual, these mad scientists from beyond the stars are unspeakably powerful and technologically hip, so they can effortlessly craft fantastic amusement park arcades for destruction testing of our doughty PC heroes. This concept is so cliche that it's hip. It takes a certain amount of courage to publish such an apparently unfashionable setting and adventure, particularly for a relatively sophisticated system as the GURPS game. And freed of such fetters as realism and real-life logic, it looks like a lot of fun.

The presentation and adventure staging are sharp and appealing, going for depth of characterization and episode rather than epic scope. To start, a plot twist in the middle of the first episode yanks the rug out from under the players' (and PCs') feet. In the opening episode, we get a well-developed event description and NPC-encounter menu. In other adventures, we'd probably get only a half-page explain-

ing how to herd the PC victims together where they can be scooped up by the ponderously linear narrative. Maybe it's a little like the movies *Airport*, *Towering Inferno*, and *Airplane*, where you get introduced to the character actors through little bits of action and reaction, but it's actually a clever model for passing action and reaction among the PCs. Everyone gets to respond in character. (Sure, they all get to respond, too, if you open with a little melee action, but there's a tired cliche if there ever was one.) By the end of the opening teaser, the PCs are loaded down with all the nice bits of characterization baggage; only then does the plot pop out of the box.

Of course, I can't share nice bits of the plot with you GMs, because your dopey players are listening. But all the stuff that happens is unexpected and tricky to handle. The genre and tone are hard to place. *Flight 13* is billed as "GURPS Horror/Space," but the correct label might be "1950s Television/Movie Science-Fiction Action-Adventure." *Twilight Zone*, anyone? At least it's not "Militaristic Space Opera."

The one problem I can see is fitting this into an ongoing campaign. The tone and texture of the setting are not likely to match a standard SF action-adventure campaign, though it would work just fine as a surprise saga for modern-day supernatural settings. (Hint: The tone would probably fit well with the GURPS Supers game, if the game matches conventional superhero role-playing models.) But even if you can't run this adventure for your group, pick it up as an example of first-class character involvement and plot development through episodic conflicts.

**Evaluation:** *Flight 13* is full of fun, is well-presented, and is an admirable model for introducing PCs to a scenario through role-playing and interaction with NPCs. It is strongly recommended, though it is a bit eccentric by contrast with other GURPS science-fiction supplements like the GURPS Space game, and it is possibly difficult to work into an ongoing GURPS campaign.

GURPS game products are available from Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760, U.S.A.

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## Sunset World from page 25

clearly of Illithid construction and presumably abandoned as a result of climate changes. We found a number of these ruins in the salt desert. I urge you to examine Master Kuro's report most carefully, but the gist of it is this: While most of the sites had been stripped of all artifacts but for the constructs themselves, a few mounds were different.

We found traces of an outer wall of stone blocks and buildings with entrances at ground level. Below the water table were organic remains preserved in the acidic soil: traces of grain and straw, a few charred timbers of pine and oak, fragmentary skeletons of horses, cattle, and geese. A few simple tools survived, and there were many spent arrows. There were other remains, too—human for the most part, though one of the partial skeletons may have been that of a gnome or small dwarf. The skulls we found bore marks of Illithid predation. All these traces and remains were ancient in the extreme.

The meaning of these findings has been much debated on our return journey and during the time since our return. The evidence is hardly conclusive, but I will put forward the conjecture which best

suits the facts as I know them. Ssirik Akuar is not the Illithid homeworld, as our taciturn githzerai guides had implied. It was once much like our own.

There is a persistent rumor among the folk of the Underearth that the Illithids seek to extinguish our Sun. This has very properly been dismissed as foolish, wishful thinking on their part. The Illithids could no more thrive on a sunless surface than could we. Within years or even months of such a ludicrous outcome, the planet would become an icy wasteland unfit for any sort of life. The ruins we found at Ssirik Akuar suggest to me a more plausible and sinister story.

Much still remains to be explained, and many more questions have been raised by this final discovery. Where did the Illithids originate if not on Ssirik Akuar? Why did the githzerai assure us they had brought us to the Illithid home world? Why should the Illithids, if they produced the Sunset World's present conditions, have stocked it with so many living things inimical to themselves? How could such changes of a world and its sun be accomplished? These are difficult questions. Rather than answer them, many of my colleagues would rather suppose some other explanation for what we found at Ssirik Akuar.

I confess that I find such questions less than compelling. I am torn between a certain lassitude—we are all of us tired still from our sojourn—and a furious urge to action, to any action. I feel a certain chill at day's end: perhaps only a relic of Ssirik Akuar's damp airs, but perhaps something more—perhaps a chill of premonition, a growing certainty that my colleagues and fellow adventurers died not merely in the service of learning, or even for our Empire, but for something greater still. They died so that we survivors might bring this warning. I look at the Sun now and wonder if it has grown somewhat redder. Are the days and nights longer than they were? As I contemplate these thoughts, a further chill runs the length of my body. Perhaps one day we, too, will dwell in a Sunset World.

*More information on mind flayers may be found in "The Ecology of the Mind Flayer," in DRAGON® issue #78. The material in this article and in "The Dragon's Bestiary" may be used with the material on mind flayers in the AD&D® 2nd Edition Monstrous Compendium, Volume 1, with some changes, particularly concerning the use of psionics and methods of Illithid reproduction.*



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*Continued from page 5*

I.C.E.'s booth, which sold the SHADOW WORLD™ fantasy game and supplements (the "Shadow" games are not related). The Australian Games Group presented its LACE & STEEL swash-buckling FRPG, set in a fantasy world much like 17th-century Europe but with centaurs, satyrs, and harpies (as well as humans) among the population. And (oops) TSR also had the Deluxe City Campaign Set, by Allen Varney, for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game. I myself was particularly intrigued by the long-awaited vehicle-rules supplement to BTRC's MACHO WOMEN WITH GUNS game: *Renegade Nuns on Wheels* ("the game that treads the fine line between heresy and blasphemy"). I am completely serious.

Other non-RPG items caught my eye. One booth had a wide assortment of furry animal figurines dressed in Napoleonic costumes, from places like the Ottoman Empire, for miniatures battles. Another sold wholesome, patriotic T-shirts, such as the one showing a B-52 against a burning horizon with the legend, "STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND: NEXT DAY AIR." There were many Buckaroo Banzai T-shirts as well, which I stupidly forgot to purchase. I also found a copy of 3W's alternate-history board game, TOMORROW THE WORLD, in which the triumphant armies of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany—with nukes, jets, and all—fight World War III for control of the Earth (in 1948, no less). The game comes with a short "historical" timeline so plausible and blood chilling that it makes the dark-future cyberpunk RPGs look obnoxiously cheerful.

As those of you who attended know, there were zillions and bejillions of games: role-playing games, board games, computer games, miniatures games, card games, dice games, family games—you-name it, it was there. The winner for special effects goes to FASA's BATTLETECH® simulators, in

which you could pilot a massive Battle-Mech in one-on-one combat against another heavily armed 'Mech—in real time, with a simulated 3-D view of your surroundings on a TV monitor. Task Force Games' STAR FLEET BATTLES, GDW's HARPOON, and GW's WARHAMMER™ 40,000 games were much in evidence in the miniatures areas. And the most-played game was, as you would expect even if you had spent the last 10 years in the jungles of Sumatra, the AD&D game.

If you were bored with gaming, there was the auction, the video room, the art show (with guest Michael Whelan and over a million dollars worth of artwork), and an exhibitor's hall in which everyone could (and did) buy themselves into a stupor. When you ran out of money, there were lots of free things to pick up all over the con, and when you had too many free things to move any more, you could sit down and play games again.

And there were seminars. Your editors ran several magazine-related seminars, one of which was accompanied by sound effects from the Miskatonic University Reunion next door, which had a contest for the best dying scream of someone who was probably being eaten alive by ghouls. It was hard to say. Anyway, we fielded a few rumors about the magazines as well, such as:

- DRAGON® Magazine does not accept material from beginning writers (we certainly do);
- DRAGON Magazine refuses to print material on non-TSR games (wrong);
- DRAGON Magazine will go out of print in two years because of falling subscriptions (what?); and
- DRAGON Magazine editors hire gangs of street thugs who use rubber truncheons to beat those who spread bad rumors about the magazine (this is false, of course, as many of the thugs we hire could never even spell "truncheons," much less use them).

The auction ran along quite rapidly, and every game, book, and figurine

was given at least a two-second chance to be sold to some buyer. There was even an auction store for unsold items, where I noticed a lonely copy of DR. RUTH'S GAME OF GOOD SEX (left over from last year's auction), which should serve as a dramatic warning about something, but perhaps this isn't the place to say exactly what.

And best of all, there were lots of famous people—authors, designers, editors, and garners—but there were entirely too many of them to name here (sorry to all). There were lots of parties, too, but I made it to only one before collapsing.

There were disappointments, of course. I never made it out to lunch with Marc Miller of GDW (really, I'll do better next year, I swear). The spare magazines we had ordered for the booth were brought in but were hidden from view under a table, and we didn't find them until late Sunday. And I never got to play in the BATTLETECH simulators or sit in on the RPG event in which Elvis is resurrected by Cthulhu. (I did watch Mike Pondsmith run a good CYBERPUNK game, though.)

At the end of it all, your editors tore down the booth and had all the product ready to ship home in one hour flat. We went out for Mexican food, and then went home to await the mixed blessings of Monday morning: the unopened mail, the exhaustion, the flu, the car repair bills, the editing, etc.

But it was fun. I'll do it again next year, but this time with more comfortable sneakers. And maybe with some all-new rumors, too, especially if they involve Elvis and nuns on motorcycles.

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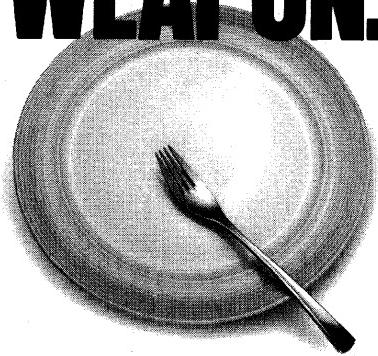
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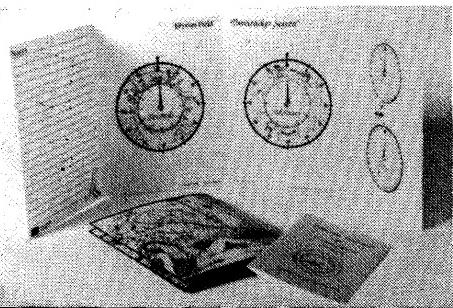
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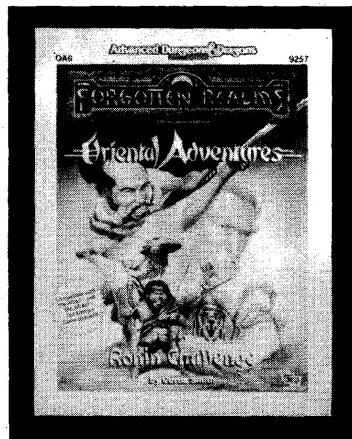
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## If you were a god, how would you run things?

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### Reviews

#### Computer-game ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

#### Electronic Arts

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#### Populous

Commodore Amiga version \$49.95

The story of Good versus Evil in a new and entertaining format has been released by Electronic Arts. Designed by Bullfrog, this game is an outstanding offering for Commodore Amiga enthusiasts. Populous is a game with a different feel and interface quite unlike anything currently available on the market. Basically, you perform miracles. You are a god and, as such, control part of a world's population.

It is your responsibility to see that your people have enough food. If you manage this task by granting your settlers land for

crops, they will worship you. Through their worship, you gain power with which you can oppose the work of another god who controls the rest of the population on the same world. The followers of the two gods fight one another, of course, and you can assist your side by decimating the enemy with a number of godlike maneuvers such as creating earthquakes, floods, swamps, and volcanoes. The god who eventually wins the most battles and creates the most knights, and whose people rule the land, wins the game. But even then, *Populous* is far from over. There are literally hundreds of worlds to conquer, and you can even design your own world using the game's built-in Creator program. *Populous* is also playable by two players over a null modem link between two Amiga computers or through phone lines via a connected modem.

The key issue in the game is the enrichment of your own people with good land, which you physically raise or lower to make it suitable for crops. Settlements start out as mud huts; as you prepare the land for planting, settlements can evolve into castles.

As your population grows, you can either ask your worshipers to settle new lands or call them to the Papal Magnet. Once a settler touches the Papal Magnet, he becomes a leader. You can convert a leader into a Knight, should you have enough Manna (energy) to do so. A Knight is a perpetual search-and-destroy machine who hunts and slays the opposition and burns its buildings. To increase the strength of your settlers (also known as walkers) and your knights, you click on the "Gather" then "Settle" icons. This causes your walkers to bump into one another and, if the settlers are of the same faith, they merge and become a single walker. We found that it helps to move the Papal Magnet to an opposition settlement, click on the "Go to Papal Magnet" icon, then wait for our folk to arrive. The first one to touch the Papal Magnet becomes a

leader; by immediately clicking on the "Knight" icon, we turn him into a Knight. Then we quickly click on the "Gather" and "Settle" icons, which causes other walkers in the area to merge with the Knight, who becomes virtually invincible as he tromps through enemy settlements.

You can turn the music and sound effects off or on, as well as save and load games. An information shield is also available that tells you the relative strengths of settlements as compared to castles, the strengths of walkers, and how combat between opposing settlers and walkers is progressing. Through Divine Intervention, you can also affect the outcome of combat by following one of your Knights into enemy territory. Should you see an opponent or a large settlement ahead, you can lower the land below the opposing force until water appears and the opponent drowns. That's one less opponent for your Knight to worry about, and he can continue with his slay-and-burn mission.

*Populous* has captured our gaming imagination for the last few days. Our only wish is that *Populous* would become available for more computer systems so that other gamers can enjoy being gods as well!

#### Palace Software, Ltd.

(distributed by Epyx, Inc.)  
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\*\*\*\*

#### Axe of Rage

Commodore 64/128 version \$33.95

We didn't think this game would amount to much. The package is one of the ugliest presentations for software we've ever seen, and it boasts an included tattoo!

Well, hold on. *Axe of Rage* is actually pretty good. The arcade game puts you in the role of either Gorth or Mariana back in the days of mammoths, pit things, razor-toothed tigers, and the gnawin' purple pack-o'-plenty creature. Your quest is to gain access to the Subterranean Sanctum of Drax, and you only have six lives with which to accomplish this feat. The creatures are tough to defeat until you learn how to time your axe swings with the joystick. For example, suppose your on-screen representative faces right; if you hold your fire button down and:

- move your joystick to the left, you execute a flying neck chop.
- move your joystick down, you kneel and let fly with a low chop.
- move your joystick to the right, you kick your opponent.
- move your joystick up, you leap into a high chop.

If your character is facing left on-screen, you simply reverse the directions of the joystick moves to accomplish any move. This is the only real drawback to playing the game, as during battle it is easy to forget that you must reverse your joystick moves when facing one direction or another. With every mistake your Gorth or

Mariana makes an attack, the enemy inflicts damage upon you. There are two strength bars at the top of the screen; one strength bar is yours, and the other is your opponents. As damage is inflicted on you or the opponent, the appropriate strength bar is reduced in size until it disappears—and death occurs. A counter keeps track of your remaining lives.

You start out in the Valley of Despair and face mutant chickens, knuckle draggers, and a lardosaurus that enjoys a quick snack of your head. This valley has a total of 26 battle arenas; if you don't learn how to wield your axe immediately, you'll be lucky to get past the sixth hostile. A sword located at the bottom of the screen is your compass and is used to reorient the screen each time you pass into another section of the maze.

Remaining levels include Level 2: The Caverns; Level 3: The Dungeon; and Level 4: Drax's Subterranean Sanctum. Additionally, look forward to the cave crud, dripping gore, and lava rivers. Fortunately, there are some amenities in the game such as a special globe that prevents Drax's evil magic from consuming you. Other goodies include a special key, a sacred axe, and a special shield (a necessity). The real key to success is to continually practice your moves during noncombative phases. Practice makes perfect and, in the case of *Axe of Rage*, ensures you'll live long enough to perhaps win the quest. *Axe of Rage* is not for those who find the sight of blood distasteful. It is an engrossing slash 'n' hack that'll please most arcaders. It is available for the C64/128 and Atari ST.

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#### **Hidden Agenda**

Apple Macintosh version \$49.95

*Hidden Agenda* is far more than a game. It is a simulation of politics as played in the life and death struggle in Central America. There is no one way to win the game; there is no one way to save your own skin; there is no one way to win over the hearts of the people while simultaneously appeasing forces that feel differently than *you*. *Hidden Agenda* is a learning experience and is on the same level of excellence as Chris Crawford's two *Balance of Power* offerings. Although *Hidden Agenda* doesn't possess the worldly scope of Mr. Crawford's offerings, the microcosm of the country of Chimerica is yours to control, for better or for worse.

You have just been elected Presidenté of Chimerica. Upon starting the adventure, you are confronted with a press conference where you must make statements regarding three goals you wish to achieve. These set the tone for your first year. Upon completing the press conference, you must fill your cabinet positions. These include the Agriculture, Defense, Internal



**Populous (Electronic Arts)**



**Barbarian (Melbourne House)**



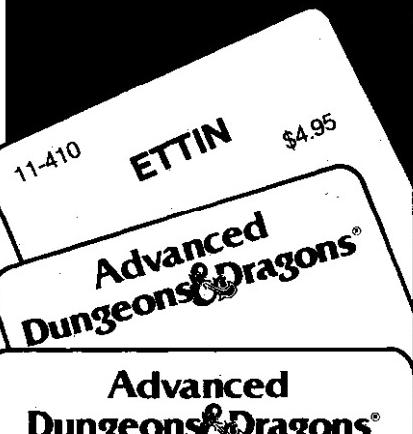
**Loom (Lucasfilm Games)**

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Affairs, and External Affairs ministers, who advise you throughout the game regarding policy decisions. But watch out! Alienation of one of these powerful ministers could lead to your downfall. The game requires a careful balance of all power brokers.

Your ministers are selected from one of three candidates put forward by the three political parties: Christian Reform, National Liberation, and Popular Stability. You click on the icon of the party in which you are interested, then select a candidate to investigate. You can read the statements this candidate has made regarding political plans. Remembering to balance your cabinet, you then appoint this candidate directly to the ministerial position for which he is most suited. (You can also fire any of your ministers during the course of the game.) When all four cabinet positions are filled, you move on to running the country.

By clicking on the Desk icon, you are presented with several options. You can proceed to an encounter with someone influential, become involved in consultations with your ministers, check your meetings through the logbook, obtain reports from news excerpts, or look at your country's progress charts.

Encounters occur with people like the landless laborer, teacher, coffee grower, American ambassador, guard leader, trade union leader, American TNC rep, IMF representative, campesino, army colonel, Soviet ambassador, rights activist, shopkeeper, coffee worker, doctor, cotton cultivator, sub-commandante, bishop, industrialist, banker, and Cuban consul. You simply click on the individual you wish to encounter and take the meeting to a conclusion. Each person wants something specific that you or your ministers may or may not favor. The result of this encounter is that you must make a decision whether to accept or reject the proposal from this individual. You may ask advice from the advising minister, who will give you his or her opinion as to what should be done with the proposal. You can put the proposal on an agenda that gives you time to mull over the information. This also allows input from all of your ministers, although some decisions can't be put off until later. Your decisions ultimately cause your support level with different forces to go up and down. The old saying that you can't please all of the people all of the time is certainly true in Chimerica.

The consultations enable you to discuss a topic of interest with the minister selected. You can make your decisions immediately or call for opinions from all of your ministers to receive a general consensus. Through the logbook, you review past meeting decisions; by reviewing the progress charts, you show how Chimerica is progressing through a variety of indexes that include military spending, social spending, infant mortality, land distribution, food crops, export crops, agricultural

earnings, cash reserves and debt, loans and aid, and news excerpts. Thanks to a reference manual from Springboard, you can study any element of *Hidden Agenda* and base your decisions on sound research from the data in the manual.

Throughout your presidency, interrupts occur. These are emergency situations that require your immediate input to avoid catastrophe. You must accept either the advice of the individual bringing the matter to your attention or the advice of a minister.

When the game draws to a conclusion, a verdict of history is presented, an encyclopedia of your term of office. You can judge how well (or how poorly) you managed Chimerica. The verdict of history can also be printed if you like. You can save your game in progress, recall saved games, or restore a saved game while in the middle of a less successful endeavor. The authors (Jim Gasperini, Ron Martinez, Gregory Guerin, Angela Greene, and Bill Herdle) have successfully brought to the computer the true feel of what it's like to be a pawn of the major powers. Included in the package is a complete, well-written user's manual, a complete and handy reference manual, and a color map of Chimerica. We strongly recommend thoroughly reading the reference material before play. *Hidden Agenda* is a role-playing event and is one of the few games we intend to keep on our game shelf and out of the packing box. This is highly recommended!

*Hidden Agenda* is available for PC/MS-DOS and Apple Macintosh computers (it runs in color on the latter). It is not copy protected and is easily transferrable to a hard disk.

**Mindscape, Inc.**  
3444 Dundee Road  
Northbrook IL 60062  
(312) 480-7667

## Gauntlet

Apple Macintosh II version \$49.95

This is a flying-finger fantasy. Talk about exciting! *Gauntlet* can drive you absolutely bonkers as you attempt to mop up dungeon levels in your quest to obtain riches. For one or two players, *Gauntlet* joins Thor, Thyra, or Merlin in a massive display of magic and hand-to-hand combat in the finest of arcade-game traditions. The color version on the Macintosh II is absolutely first-rate.

What's unique is that in a two-player game, both gamers can select a character. When working in unison to clear dungeon levels, selecting characters with differing but complimentary powers works to your advantage. For example, Thor the warrior can axe the monsters to pieces, but his magic skill is lacking. He can magic away some of the monsters, but until those monster generators are destroyed, those

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gruesome goons continue to come out ad *infinitum*. Perhaps Merlin the Wizard should be the second character. Although he wears no armor and is the absolute pits when it comes to hand-to-hand combat, his magic can destroy the monster generators and all monsters. The third character, Thyra, is most at home in a defensive role as her shield can stop about 30% of all damage and her sword can cut through the monster generators. The fourth available character is an elf named Questor. Despite poor shot power, lousy armor, and a dagger that cannot destroy the monster generators, his magic skills are top-notch. The key to each dungeon level attack must be the monster generators which continually spew out beasties at an unbelievable rate until you rid the level of this infernal machine.

Even if you start the game as a single player, a compatriot can join you at the press of the fire button or fire key of the appropriate control. With two players, one uses the mouse and the other the keyboard. You can also save a game in progress, and *Gauntlet* runs under MultiFinder.

With the Dark Prince himself lurking to steal 200 points of health from you, remember that only magic will defeat him. Other nasties include sorcerers, lobbers (they toss rocks at you over dungeon walls, then flee), demons (fireball shooters), grunts (creeps with clubs), and ghosts (they hit you once, then disappear). You can gain extra pickup power that enables you to carry as many as 15 items, extra fighting power for increased hand-to-hand combat ability, extra shot power to increase your missile damage to opponents, extra shot speed to make your missiles fly like rockets, extra magic power to boost potion effects, and extra armor. Other items you might find on the dungeon levels include an amulet that turns you invisible for a short time, treasure chests, food, keys, transporters, nasty traps, cider, and poison that looks like cider.

Cooperation in the treasure rooms garners the most points for all concerned, and the best way to destroy the monster generators is to shoot them. The exits to differing levels are labeled. Though your partner is immune to your own shots or attacks, there are areas in *Gauntlet* where you can stun or injure your compatriot. The Macintosh II version has an options menu that not only identifies each monster and its capabilities, but it also has a treasure screen that identifies the goodies you find.

*Gauntlet* is a great example of arcading excellence. It shows that the Apple Macintosh II computer is reaching far beyond the work-a-day world and is a computer fit for superb gaming. *Gauntlet* is one arcade goodie that should find its way to any gamer's Macintosh. Versions are also available for C64/128, Atari B-bit, Atari ST, Apple II family, Apple IIgs, and PC/MS-DOS computers.

## Dragon Bytes

**Mandscape, Inc.**  
3444 Dundee Road  
Northbrook IL 60062  
(312) 480-7667

*Trust and Betrayal: The Legacy of Sibot* \* \* \* \* 1/2

Apple Macintosh version \$49.95

Chris Crawford, known for his game design, has succeeded again. *Trust and Betrayal: The Legacy of Sibot* is one of Chris's "mind games." However, as is the case with all of Chris's games, *Trust and Betrayal* is not for the novice game player. In fact, it may not even be for the advanced game player. *Trust and Betrayal* is complicated!

The player is a character called Vetyl, who is one of seven acolytes on Kira, a moon of the Planet Lamina. The colony on Kira is all that is left of Lamina's civilization after a nuclear war. The Kirians are telepathic and therein lies the foundation of *Trust and Betrayal*. The job of the player is to obtain new telepathic powers by acquiring eight auras of three types. The three aura types are tanaga, katsin, and shial, and each aura has its own set of special properties. Auras are mental properties associated with telepathy. The game is played between acolytes trying to acquire the perfect 8-8-8 set of auras.

The telepathic battles occur at night while you are asleep. Your spirit travels to the Land of Auras where you encounter the spirits of other acolytes. Each aura has its own set of special properties. During a telepathic battle, you wrap yourself in one of these auras, as does your opponent. Defeating an aura is like playing the old game of Rock, Paper, Scissors. In *Trust and Betrayal*, a tanaga aura will defeat a katsin aura, a katsin aura defeats a shial aura, and a shial aura defeats a tanaga aura. Confusing? It can be, but once you start playing, the rules of the game are easy to remember. You try to play the aura that will defeat the aura of your opponent, thus gaining auras you have in short supply. The tricks are to learn how many auras your potential opponent has and to anticipate which aura he will use in battle.

*Trust and Betrayal* is won or lost in your dialogs with other characters and acolytes. You must use such attributes as tact, bluster, and friendliness in order to learn who is trustworthy and who is not. You also learn about the auras the other acolytes have and might use.

As difficult as it is, *Trust and Betrayal* is an interactive human-relationship game. As a player, you gain advantages by learning as much as you can about each character you encounter. Like life, *Trust and Betrayal* relies heavily on a player's intuition and insight. Continued play while increasing the difficulty level increases your understanding of relationships and how they affect the game.

*Trust and Betrayal* is a superior concoc-

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tion of a game. It is fun yet serious. Its difficulty will scare away many players, which is unfortunate. In some respects, Trust and Betrayal reminds me of the Oriental game, GO, as the latter's philosophical and psychological underpinnings are similar to *Trust and Betrayal*. For game players who like a challenge and enjoy a "head trip," *Trust and Betrayal: The Legacy of Sibot* is a must.

Mark D. Veljkov

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### Barbarian

PC/MS-DOS version \$39.99

You are Hegor, the most famous dragon slayer of all in a time and place long ago. You saw a dragon kill your father when you were a child, and you have sworn to avenge his death. Now the kingdom is in turmoil as children disappear at night and homes are burned to the ground. The king offers his crown and riches to whoever can stop this terrible trouble. So the adventure begins—and *Barbarian* is fun. The monsters don't appear so quickly that there isn't time to catch your breath. *Barbarian* is proof that there are good adventures for PC/MS-DOS machines that consider a variety of graphics modes. This game is available for Amiga, C64/128, and Apple IIcs computers.

Courtney Harrington

\*\*\*\*

## News and new products

**Broderbund Software** (415-492-3200) has released *Licence to Kill*. In the computer game, the player is Agent 007, who fights across land, sea, and air to defeat a drug lord. The player pilots helicopters in pursuit of planes and jeeps, swims with sharks, dodges bullets, water-skis with a harpoon gun, and chases oil tankers in a crop duster. The game is scheduled for release in formats for PC/MS-DOS, Commodore Amiga, Atari ST (\$34.95), and C64/128 (\$29.95) computers.

Carmen Sandiego travels far into the past in her best-selling series. In the form of an exciting detective chase, *Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego?* highlights leading people, events, and inventions of the past 1,500 years. The program is scheduled for release this fall in PC/MS-DOS and Apple II versions, for \$44.95 each. In this fourth adventure, Carmen Sandiego and her gang have a time machine that allows them to go back in time, from A.D. 400 to the 1950s. She's now dispatching gang members to Spain in 1492 to steal Queen Isabella's jewels, and to visit England in 1215 to snatch the Magna Carta. Not to be outdone, the Acme Detective Agency has developed a time machine of its own. The player takes the part of a detective who must round up the renegades. To help

interpret clues, the game comes with a 1,300-page reference book, *The New American Library Desk Encyclopedia*. There is also an on-line graphic database of historical clues.

**Data East** (408-286-7074) has released *Heavy Barrel* in formats for C64/128 and PC/MS-DOS computers, for \$29.95 and \$39.95 respectively. The player must recapture the underground control complex of a nuclear missile site occupied by terrorists before the terrorists launch the missiles. The terrorists have tanks, treacherous waterways, and bridges, as well as the only weapon capable of dismantling their organization: the Heavy Barrel, the most powerful gun ever created. However, a clever technician dismantled Heavy Barrel before the terrorist invasion, and it's in pieces hidden inside the installation. The player must move quickly to locate and reassemble the weapon, which is stored in six different lockers. The player must find the keys to each locker, find the lockers, and reassemble Heavy Barrel without being detected. He must then eliminate the terrorist leader and regain control of the complex.

**Interplay Productions** (714-549-2411) has released *Dragon Wars*, set in the humid world of Oceana, 85% of whose surface is covered with water and is dotted with islands. Play begins as you and a party of pilgrims set out on a voyage for a holy land in search of a better life. Along the way, the ship docks at a harbor for supplies—but you and your party are dragged off the ship by merciless guards, imprisoned, and stripped of everything but your wits. You are confined to Purgatory, a prison-city created by King Drake of Phoebus.

The once kind and good King Drake has begun conquering surrounding islands in an apparent effort to rule Oceana, which has never known a unified government. He has declared, without reason, that all magic is forbidden. Several islands threaten to unleash their guardian dragons: beasts that are believed to be the mightiest deterrent of attack and the most destructive force in Oceana. The player must learn why magic is illegal and stop Drake's conquest. *Dragon Wars* features an easy-to-use pop-up window environment, supports characters from *Bard's Tale I, II, and III*, and has automapping, so there's no need for graph paper. *Dragon Wars* is available for the Apple II computer for \$49.95. A version for the C64/128 costs \$44.95, and one for PC/MS-DOS machines will be released this fall.

**Lucasfilm Games** (415-662-1800) will soon release *Loom*, a fantasy adventure game. A unique feature of *Loom* is a graphic interface that dispenses entirely with text commands and menus, relying instead on icons and music. The setting for *Loom* is the Age of Great Guilds, a mythical time when shepherds, blacksmiths, and glassmakers ruled the world. Its unlikely hero is Bobbin, a young member of the

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mysterious Guild of Weavers, who finds himself playing the pivotal role in a mighty conflict between good and evil. As the game opens, Bobbin is alone in his Weaver village. The Elders of the Guild have mysteriously disappeared, swept away by an unknown force. All Bobbin can do is search for clues. When he finds a Weaver's distaff, the magic of Loom begins. On the screen, the distaff, resembling a rough walking stick, appears under the graphics window. Divided into eight segments, each related to a musical note, the distaff both detects and weaves magical spells. *Loom* is scheduled for release for PC/MS-DOS, Amiga, and Atari ST computers.

**MicroProse** (301-771-1151) will release *Sword of the Samurai* for PC/MS-DOS machines. The game will follow the Micro-Prose fantasy/role-playing traditions first established with the award-winning *Pirates!* game. Atmosphere is emphasized as well as an accurate portrayal of historical Japanese culture. Players take on the role of an ambitious young Samurai seeking to move up the military and social ladders. By first becoming daimyo, or lord of his clan, the Samurai begins a dramatic climb to power that can ultimately lead to the title of Shogun, ruler of all Japan.

**Omnitrend Software** (203-658-6917) has made available the latest installment in the *Universe* series: *Universe 3*. *Universe 3* is a graphics oriented science fiction adventure game. Using a set of command boxes, the player can control characters and objects without typing words on the keyboard. A complete set of icons on the screen allow the player to move around the game. Combined, these icons and command boxes create a unique, elegant interface that makes *Universe 3* stand out from ordinary adventure games. The PC/MS-DOS price is \$49.95. Versions for the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST will also appear this year.

**Origin Systems** (603-644-3360) has *Omega* scheduled to appear this year. You'll design futuristic cybertanks and compete in free-for-all or team combat on a simulated battlefield. The game will be available for PC/MS-DOS, C64/128, Apple IIGS, Macintosh, Commodore Amiga, and Atari ST computers at a price of \$49.95. *Omega* starts the player as a cybernetic engineer for the Organization of Strategic Intelligence, the world's leader in military cybernetic applications. Players must design a cybertank's chassis, artificial intelligence, integrated weapons technology, and electronics equipment to create the supreme cybertank. Cybertank designs are then tested in simulated combat against OSI cybertanks. Success on the battlefield leads to higher security levels and increased budgets for new designs.

Origin has also announced the release of *Windwalker*, a new role-playing game with animated martial arts action. *Windwalker* combines elements of classic fantasy role-playing with real-time, animated, martial-arts combat sequences and authentically

depicted acrobatic and gymnastic movements. Players encounter a variety of characters in palaces, monasteries, pagodas, and countryside. It features over 100 characters and a full-scrolling terrain with more than 100 different settings and scenes. *Windwalker* will be available in fall for IBM-PC/Tandy and compatibles, Apple II series, C64/128, Macintosh, and Amiga computers for \$39.95.

From **Videotakes** (201-528-5000) comes a videocassette that explains the secrets of Nintendo compatible games. Loaded with secret passwords, winning strategies, and amazing tricks for your favorite games, this videocassette includes the secrets of *Double Dragon*, *Contra*, *Blaster Master*, *Rambo*, *Simon's Quest*, *Life Force*, *Metal Gear*, *Iron Tank*, and dozens of other top games. All tricks, codes, and strategies are demonstrated by the U.S. National Video Team. The tape runs 60 minutes and costs \$19.95.

### Clue corner

#### *Eternal Dagger* (SSI)

In order to enter Avlis's Tower, you must have the Bag of Winds from the eagles. Plus, you must have 20 copper pieces. They MUST be copper; gold won't do!

To find the princess, follow the hallway until you come to double doors. Go through these doors and battle your way through the nursery that you'll find beyond a second set of double doors. At the bottom of the nursery is another doorway. Go through it. You'll enter a storeroom. Don't bother searching the wall, but DO search the shelf. You should find a peg, which you should turn. A secret door will become exposed in the northwest part of the wall which can only be opened after you've turned the peg. Go through the secret door, and you'll encounter dragon-men. Battle them and, if you win, march right through an illusory wall that represents itself as the eastern section of the north wall. Once through the illusory wall, you'll find the princess.

The way to win this game is to destroy the globe.

#### *Legacy of the Ancients* (Electronic Arts)

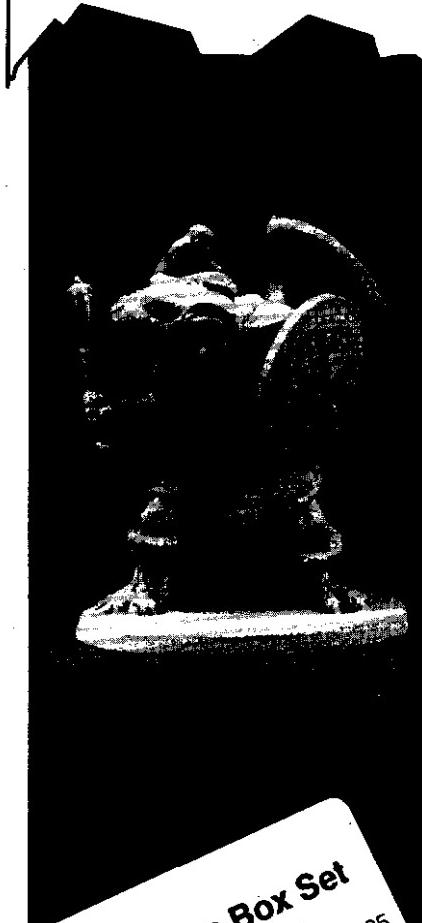
- When you begin the game, view the Fountain and Thornberry. This will place you in that town and net you 200 in gold.
- ALWAYS speak to encounters in the wilderness: those that will let you, that is.
- Visit the fortune teller often.
- Play blackjack instead of flip-flop; the odds of winning are better.
- The museum caretaker knows many things.
- When you receive a topaz coin, go to the native currency exhibit. Each time you visit it, you will receive approximately 2,000 gold pieces.
- Each dungeon has eight levels. Always use the XAMINE command on new pas-

*Continued on page 95*

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For more information about Space Combat, or our other games, write to:


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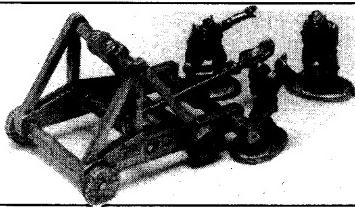
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## The Play-By-Mail Association

The PBMA is a trade organization for the play-by-mail gaming industry. If you would like FREE information about play-by-mail gaming, write to:

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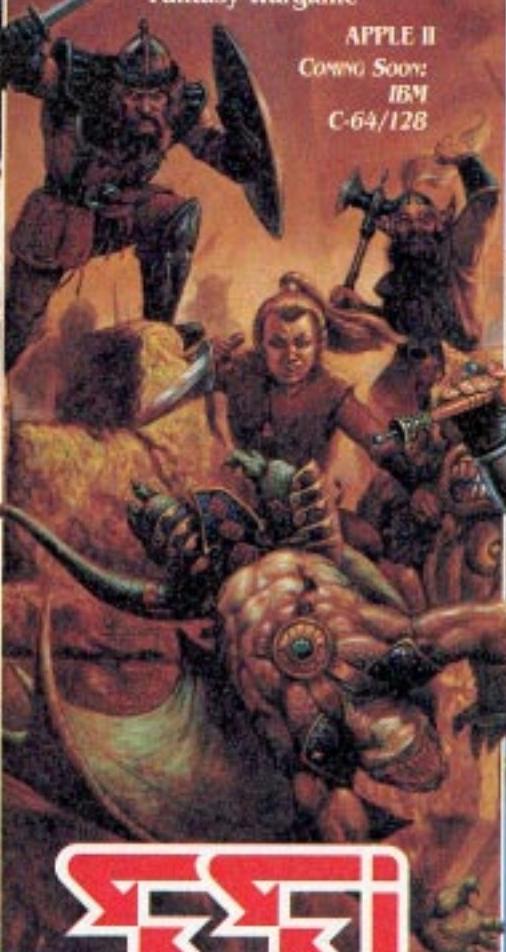
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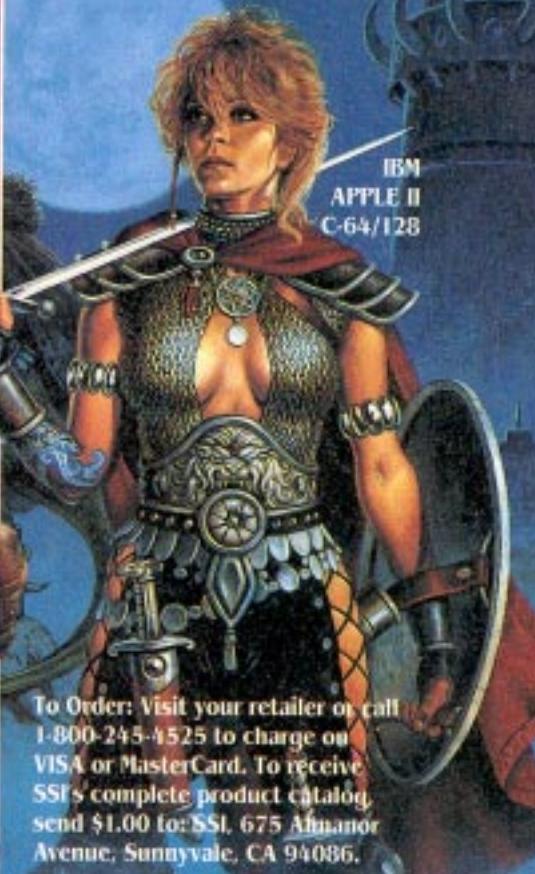
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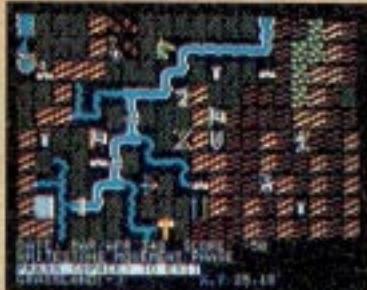
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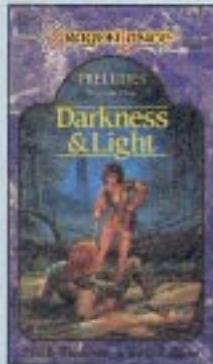
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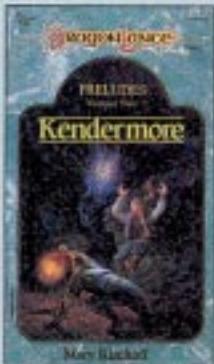
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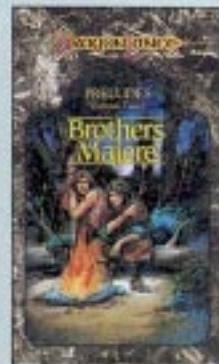
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Illustration by Terry Dykstra

# Darkest Secrets

What you don't know could kill  
you in the TOP SECRET/S.I.<sup>TM</sup> game

by Marcus L. Rowland

TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.<sup>TM</sup> character-generation system, suggests some interesting possibilities for creative refereeing that aren't explicitly developed. One aspect can easily add many new facets to the game: the advantages and disadvantages discussed in chapter 2 of the *Players Guide*. The rules require player characters to take one advantage and one disadvantage, and optionally allow multiple advantages and disadvantages. Players always know that their PCs have these traits—but in the real world, we don't always know everything about ourselves. Can anyone be absolutely sure that he doesn't have a secret enemy, unknown admirer, unsuspected allergy, or hidden talent?

An additional optional rule can be used to allow for such surprises: At the Administrator's discretion, and with the player's consent, the Administrator may secretly award an agreed number of points in advantages and disadvantages to each PC, but without initially revealing their effects to the players. These traits are recorded by the Administrator, not the players, and their effects are only revealed in play.

For example, a player might agree to take five points in unknown disadvantages to buy five extra skill points, or to gain an unknown three-point advantage and an unknown three-point disadvantage. The Administrator needs to do some extra record-keeping, but the effect is to add a little more tension, always useful in an adventure game like this one. Usually, secret advantages and disadvantages are more specific than their overt equivalents; for example, someone would know that he was afraid of dogs but might not know about his fear of octopi until an octopus was encountered.

The remainder of this article describes secret versions of some of the Players Guide advantages and disadvantages, including some new ones. In some cases, you may need to refer to descriptions in the Players Guide. The Administrator should try to ensure that these secrets are occasionally important; they are meaningless if they are never used. To ensure their secrecy, the Administrator should change some of these secrets slightly in game play or even add new ones.

## **Secret advantages**

**Acute smell** (1 point): The PC is very sensitive to a specific scent (e.g., jasmine, chloroform), even if it is very weak. He will automatically notice it without making an INT check. In all other respects, his sense of smell is normal with no modifiers to INT rolls. The Administrator chooses the scent when allocating this advantage. The PC has no knowledge of this ability until the scent is first encountered and won't automatically know what has been smelled.

**Acute taste** (1 point): The PC is sensitive to the taste of a specific chemical or drug (e.g., cocaine, chloral hydrate) in extremely small concentrations and will automatically detect the substance without making an INT check. In all other respects, his sense of taste is normal. The Administrator chooses the chemical; the PC is unaware of this ability until the chemical is first encountered and won't necessarily know what is being tasted.

**Animal friendship** (1 point): The PC is unusually attractive to one specific class of animals (e.g., snakes), which will never harm the PC unless such creatures are attacked first. This advantage can be combined with a contrasting phobia or allergy, with amusing results; for example, cats seem to like to be near people who are allergic to them. A PC won't know that he has this ability until he encounters the animal, and it can't be improved by the Animal Training skill.

**Bilingual background** (1 point): This is a forgotten ability; the PC learned a second language as a child (e.g., he was brought up in China) but forgot it for some traumatic reason (e.g., the death of a parent caused a sudden move to another country). Nothing of that language is remembered on a conscious level. The PC has the language skill at zero level, but an equally traumatic triggering event (e.g., torture by Chinese agents) is required to bring it into play. If the PC tries to learn this language before the block is resolved, it's much harder than usual; all language checks are at -10%. The Administrator selects the language and triggering event when the PC is generated.

**Language ability** (1 point): This is a traumatically blocked version of the normal Language Ability; the PC has an unconscious gift for languages, but some forgotten event (e.g., a hostile teacher at school) has stopped conscious use of this

talent. A triggering event or psychotherapy may remove the block. Until then, the PC learns languages normally. The Administrator selects a suitable trigger event (e.g., the death of the teacher is reported in a school newsletter) when allocating this advantage.

**Obscure knowledge** (1-2 points): The PC has a limited form of the usual Obscure Knowledge skill. For example, a knowledge of an old science-fiction TV series might be worth one point and a broad knowledge of science fiction two points. Introduce this skill at an appropriate moment; the PC always had it but never thought of it as a useful talent until the need arose. It's up to the Administrator to ensure that this talent is actually helpful occasionally; perhaps the agents must infiltrate a group of Trekkies with plans for global domination.

**Wealth** (1-3 points): The PC is unknowingly rich, being the lost heir to some vast estate, owner of some forgotten shares that have rocketed in value, or holder of the winning ticket in the Peruvian national lottery.

**1 point:** Potential annual income of \$10,000.

**2 points:** Potential annual income of \$50,000.

**3 points:** Potential annual income of \$100,000.

Each level of wealth costs one point less than in the normal form of this advantage, because PCs start with no income from this advantage and should encounter difficulties in claiming their rightful riches. And don't forget the tax man.

## **New advantages**

**Connection in high places** (1-3 points): This can be either a normal or secret advantage. The PC has unusual links to an NPC holding influential office:

**1 point:** Mayor, low-level diplomat, etc.

**2 points:** Senator, member of Parliament, Congressman, senior diplomat, etc.

**3 points:** President, Prime Minister, ambassador, etc.

If this advantage is used normally, the link is known to the PC and may be common knowledge (e.g., the two share a common background at school or in the armed services, are related by blood or marriage, etc.). If this advantage is secret, the PC doesn't know about the relationship but the NPC does (e.g., the PC is the illegitimate son of a senator). The PC won't know why he occasionally receives preferential treatment, such as early promotion, and he can't ask for favors from his helper.

**Criminal connection** (1-4 points): This can be a normal or secret advantage. The PC has unusual links to a criminal NPC:

**1 point:** Minor thug, street criminal, etc.

**2 points:** City-level criminal (e.g., organized crime boss).

**3 points:** National crime leader (e.g., organized crime "godfather").

**4 points:** Head of international criminal organization (e.g., leader of a terrorist or criminal group planning to hold the world to ransom, etc.).

Normally, the link is known to the PC and may be common knowledge (e.g., the two share a common background in the old neighborhood, are related by blood or marriage, etc.). These connections will help the PC by providing equipment, thugs, or information to the limits of their resources, provided that the PC isn't trying to interfere with "business." If the advantage is secret, the PC doesn't know about the relationship but the NPC does (e.g., the PC is married to the illegitimate child of a Mafia chieftain). This may occasionally mean that NPCs try to destroy a PC they would normally help, but no true master criminal would let such sentimental details stand in the way of business.

**Contacts everywhere** (2 points): This is best described as the Indiana Jones advantage; the PC knows someone in any area, though the person known is rarely as useful or reliable as the connections described previously. For example, Agent X needs to investigate a gang of Parisian thugs; he checks his address book, and the Administrator says that he finds the number of a gendarme he once met at a police conference in Miami. Contacts aren't necessarily friendly and may occasionally prove to belong to rival organizations.

If the advantage is secret, the PC meets such acquaintances with no advance warning. A PC with this advantage might crash a plane in the desert, encounter nomads, then discover that he and the Arab chieftain once went to the same university.

**Reputation** (1-3 points): People respect the agent. A one-point advantage means that senior officials of the PC's agency respect the PC; two points mean that everyone in the agency admires the PC; and three points mean that other allied agencies respect the PC. The NPCs concerned will do their best to ensure that the PC gets the best equipment, good seats on airliners, comfortable hotel rooms, etc. Reputation also acts as a modifier on reaction rolls; each point adds 5% to WIL when trying to persuade or coerce someone who is aware of the agent's reputation.

If this is a secret advantage, the PC is unaware of the preferential treatment. Don't all agents get rooms at the Ritz? Doesn't everyone's Walther PPK have ivory inlay on the grips? Naturally, players will catch on in time; if they start to expect preferential treatment or to abuse it, you should reduce the points in this advantage or offset them with the Notoriety disadvantage that follows.

**Supernatural help** (2, 4, or 6 points): This is an extremely rare advantage that should only be used if it fits the setting of your campaign, and then only if players will not abuse it. The PC has supernatural powers or contacts.

**2 points:** The PC is a medium and can occasionally obtain information from the

Beyond by intense concentration, hypnosis, seances, etc.

**4 points:** The PC can frequently tap into mystic information sources with relative ease. Remember that supernatural information won't be admissible in court!

**6 points:** The PC has a spirit companion—a helpful ghost! Naturally, there should be strict limits on the usefulness of such a powerful advantage; most ghosts are described as unable to move large objects, unable to appear in daylight, etc. Most people should be unable to see or hear the spirit. Ghosts may be able to move small objects and supply limited amounts of information, but they should be undependable allies, easily offended or distracted.

If you want to make this a secret advantage, the PC isn't consciously aware of such help. The 2-point and 4-point advantages should be presented as lucky guesses, the 6-point advantage is presented as a combination of hallucinations and lucky accidents. Alternatively, this power might only come into use after some preselected traumatic event, such as the death of a friend or after training by an NPC mystic.

## Secret disadvantages

**Allergies** (1-2 points): These work exactly like normal allergies, but the PC is unaware of them until they occur. Secret allergies always relate to relatively obscure substances, so they can't be worth three points (for a common severe effect), since the PC would know about the allergy if the triggering substance was common. For example, a PC might be unaware of an allergy to bearskin until he impersonated a Canadian fur trapper.

**Cowardice** (2 points): The PC isn't afraid of every source of danger, but he has an exaggerated fear of one form of attack or one particular attacker, and he must make a WIL check to avoid freezing or fleeing in panic. For example, a PC might have an unusual fear of razors, guns, ninja, chain saws, etc. The Administrator should not choose the attack form or attacker until the PC has been wounded at least once; it seems likely that the trauma of a wound will cause such a deep-rooted fear. Perhaps Agent X was once severely beaten by Otto Schlumpf, a sadistic East German hit man. He now has an irrational fear of Schlumpf and must make a WIL check whenever he is encountered. If Schlumpf is killed, the Administrator must find a new nemesis, such as Schlumpf's brother, etc.

**Ego signature** (2 points): The PC is unconsciously leaving behind clues such as chewed pencil stubs, distinctive cigarette ends, gum wrappers folded into complex origami shapes, etc. These clues aren't as readily traceable as those left by PCs with the normal disadvantage of this type but may still reveal a lot to forensic science.

**Enemy** (1, 2, or 4 points): This is an unknown enemy, someone that the PC

knows nothing about. For example, the wife of someone the agent has killed might try to get revenge by discrediting the PC (1 point). A lone survivor of a gang that has apparently been wiped out might try to kill the agent who uncovered them (2 points). A large or dangerous organization might have an obscure reason to seek revenge on a hapless agent (4 points). In all other respects, this is identical to the normal Enemy disadvantage, but it may take some time to learn who is involved and why the PC is being attacked.

**Phobia** (1 point): This is identical to a normal phobia, but the PC has no conscious knowledge of the disability. It can only be a one-point phobia (the fear of a rare or unlikely occurrence or object), because the PC would know about anything that occurred more frequently. Fear of tigers or fear of nuclear weapons (seen close up) are suitably rare; PCs are unlikely to run into either in everyday life.

**Traumatic flashbacks** (2 points): As with phobias, secret flashbacks can only be triggered by some rare occurrence. The PC would have learned to expect the flashbacks if the triggering circumstance was at all common.

**Vision impairment** (2 points): The PC is unknowingly suffering from some sort of visual abnormality (such as tunnel vision) that hasn't yet been diagnosed. Roll under  $\frac{1}{2}$  skill when using any skill that depends on the aspect of vision involved in the disability. Naturally, this disadvantage shouldn't be combined with any incompatible visual advantage.

## New disadvantages

**Dyslexia** (1 point): The PC isn't illiterate, but he has trouble reading and making sense of what has been read. Whenever anything is read, the PC must roll under INT to understand it, or make a language roll under  $\frac{1}{2}$  normal skill when dealing with another language. If the roll is failed, give the PC slightly misleading information, such as a wrongly spelled address or formula, or a telephone number with two digits transposed. If this is a secret disadvantage, avoid tipping off the PC too quickly by asking all players to make INT or language rolls whenever anything is read (but ignore the results for normal PCs).

**Notoriety** (1, 2, or 3 points): The PC has a poor reputation from a record of damaging accidents, mistakes, or unnecessary violence. A one-point disadvantage means that senior officials of the agency dislike the PC; two points mean that everyone in the agency despises the PC; and three points mean that other allied agencies are aware of the PC's reputation. The NPCs concerned will do their best to ensure that the PC gets the worst equipment, lousy seats on airliners, uncomfortable hotel rooms, etc. Notoriety also acts as a modifier on reaction rolls; each point takes 5% off WIL when trying to persuade or coerce someone who is aware of the agent's

poor status.

If this is a secret disadvantage, the PC is unaware of the unfavorable treatment. It's odd that all the other agents get rooms at the Ritz and Walther PPKs with ivory inlay on the grips, while the PC stays at rat-infested boarding houses and is issued a rusty Luger, but there are bound to be occasional administrative foulups.

Naturally, players will catch on in time and may attempt to buy off this disadvantage by acts of heroism and other activities that tend to improve their reputations. Encourage the other agents to accuse them of being glory hogs or claim that their grand-standing endangers the team!

**Unearned fame** (1, 2, or 4 points): This is the gunfighter's disadvantage. There's always someone out there who wants to gain fame by taking out the champion.

**1 point:** The reputation is only slightly exaggerated (e.g., the PC is rumored to be a black belt in karate, not just a reasonably competent martial artist).

**2 points:** Gross exaggeration of one ability (e.g., there are stories that the PC can hit a fly with a single bullet at 50', when the PC can barely hit a car at that range).

**4 points:** This is bad news. For some reason, the PC is treated as a virtual superman, hypercompetent in every area of physical and mental activity. This is very confusing if the PC happens to be a rookie agent on his first assignment! These situations can be the result of mistaken identity, agency or media hype, exaggeration, or misleading records. An agent might be given an impressive record to decoy the opposition and draw fire while the real master spy does the dirty work. If this is a secret disadvantage, the PC learns of it only when challengers start to crawl out of the woodwork, eager to take on the "master agent." If this seems at all exaggerated, remember that there are quite a few people around named James Bond, and most have trouble if they have to go through Customs or deal with other officials! *[I never have any trouble.—The editor].*

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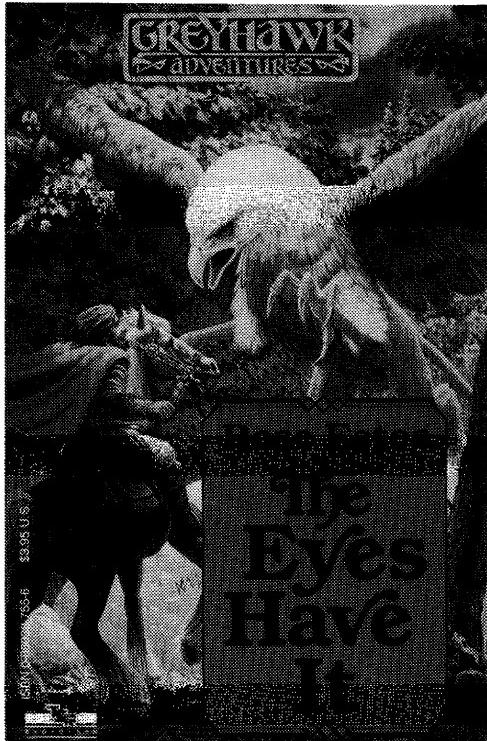
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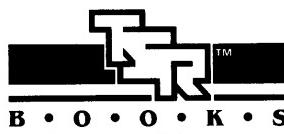
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# A Final Frontier of Your Own

by John J. Terra

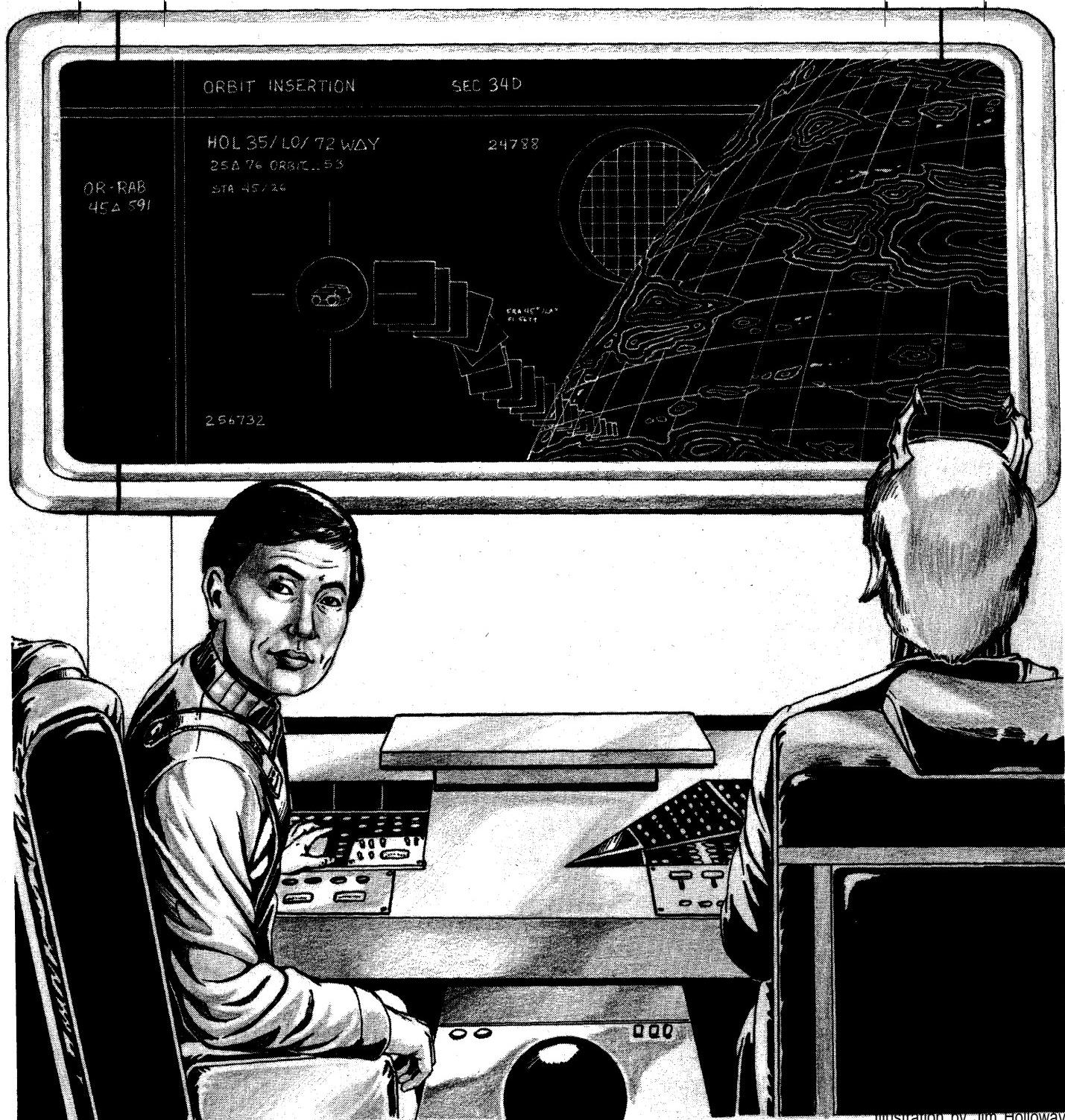


Illustration by Jim Holloway

# Campaign creation for FASA's STAR TREK®: The Role Playing Game

*Captain's Log, U.S.S. Valiant, Captain Koren Anastas reporting; Reference Star-date 2/2202.11: It has been 36 hours since First Officer Yoshitomo Karasuma, Chief Engineer Stephen Decataur, Chief Science Officer Kai-Jasik, and Dr. Trisha Steuben beamed down to the surface of Gamma Draconis IV. We have lost contact with them, but we face an even greater problem. The IKV Leading Sword, a Klingon D-10 heavy cruiser, has taken up an orbit trailing our position. The captain of that vessel has a personal grudge against me. I can do little about it, as Starfleet has instructed us not to initiate hostilities. I dare not lower my shields to beam down a search party, since this will leave my vessel vulnerable to the Klingons. These next few hours will sorely test my command abilities, and I pray that I will not be found wanting.*

By now you must be wondering who on earth (or anywhere else in space) is Koren Anastas, and what is the U.S.S. *Valiant*? To about two dozen people, the U.S.S. *Valiant* is a ship as familiar as the legendary U.S.S. *Enterprise* is to all of Trekkdom. It is an *Enterprise* - class vessel around which a particular STAR TREK® The Role Playing Game campaign revolves. A campaign is the best way to play this game, and this article will show how to run one.

## Why a campaign?

FASA Corporation has published many STAR TREK game modules that contain ready-to-play PCs and their ships. While this is certainly convenient and good for those who play only once in a while, it is not helpful to those who want a continuous campaign.

Players of other role-playing systems have enjoyed the satisfaction of creating PCs from their own imaginations and playing them. After playing one character repeatedly, the player can see the PC grow in strength and experience. A personality develops, making the PC a believable entity. It becomes a source of pride and a symbol of accomplishment.

For the STAR TREK game, this principle applies in more detail. Imagine a lieutenant PC in the Helm department who is played often enough to rise in rank to Chief Helmsman. Further into the campaign, the ship's First Officer resigns, and the Captain chooses the Chief Helmsman to replace her. Eventually, the Captain retires and our humble former lieutenant

now rises to the rank of Captain and takes command of the vessel. Can you imagine how richly developed such a PC is? Think of what this PC has been through and the stories he can tell!

It gets even better. The previously mentioned U.S.S. *Valiant* was assigned to my campaign group as a *Constitution* - class vessel. The campaign's beginning stardate was mutually agreed to be the time that Captain Kirk and the U.S.S. *Enterprise* returned from their five-year mission. Time progressed, and the ship was eventually converted to a powerful *Enterprise*-class vessel (as per *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*). For about a year, while the U.S.S. *Valiant* underwent her conversion, the crew was reassigned to a dinky transport/espionage vessel. The crew developed a quick appreciation for its old ship, and everyone was overjoyed when reunited with her. (It is easy to see why Kirk was so attached to his own ship.) But in time, the U.S.S. *Valiant* was retired because of excessive wear and tear. The campaign now centers on the *Excelsior*-class battleship, the U.S.S. *Excalibur*, NCC 2004. Ships, too, develop lives of their own.

In short, a campaign allows the development of PCs and events. It gives the players goals, whether to seek the head of a department or the command of a starship. The campaign approach gives a sense of consistency and continuity which makes the game resemble "real life" a bit more. Friends are made, contacts are established, and, inevitably, enemies are created. Events that help mold each PC's personality occur, helping the PC's history grow to the size of a small novel.

## Getting things ready

Before starting a campaign, the game master (GM) should become as well versed in as many aspects of *Star Trek* as possible. There are several different science-fiction role-playing games on the market, but only one *Star Trek* environment. It is not enough for a GM to know science fiction; the GM must be able to capture the feel of *Star Trek*.

The sourcebooks that FASA Corporation publishes are top priority. The books most needed in addition to the game itself are the *Star Trek III* and *Star Trek IV Sourcebook Updates*, and the Klingon, Romulan, Federation, and Orion sourcebooks and ship recognition manuals. These books enable the GM to start his campaign anywhere in the Federation and at any point in history from the beginning of Kirks five-year mission to his demotion from admiral back to captain, commanding a new U.S.S. *Enterprise*.

Other sourcebook and reference materials are helpful but not essential unless your campaign is geared in these directions. These materials include: *Trader Captains and Merchant Princes*, the *Triangle Sourcebook* and *Triangle Campaign Book*, and the *Star Fleet Intelligence Manual*. Note: *Trader Captains and Merchant Princes* includes a little-known but much

desired bit of information—how much a Starfleet officer gets paid!

The *Star Trek: The Next Generation Officers Manual* is only needed if you want hard data on new Starfleet vessels. From a game-mechanics standpoint, it gives little information on a campaign set in the timeline of the new television series.

If your campaign includes ship battles and you want them to be "realistically" portrayed, the *Star Trek Starship Combat Tactical Simulator* is a good investment.

Watching episodes of the old series gives you the flavor of the *Star Trek* environment and terminology. The movies are a must. As far as the dozens of *Star Trek* novels are concerned, many are not consistent with the actual *Star Trek* universe—or with each other, for that matter. Still, any *Star Trek* novels by John M. Ford, Diane Duane, or Vonda McIntyre are fairly consistent and worthwhile.

## Timing is everything

The next thing you should decide on is the time period in which the campaign is taking place. Between the beginning of the old series and the end of the fourth movie, approximately 16 years have passed. During that time, Federation technology has improved and political situations have changed. New worlds have been admitted to the UFP the Organians have stopped enforcing the Organian Treaty, and Project Genesis has caused a galactic uproar.

The ship recognition manuals become valuable tools in showing the smart GM which ships were available at what points in history. It can be very embarrassing to be caught using Spacedock a full decade before its completion! The *Federation Ship Recognition Manual* shows, for instance, when each Constitution-class vessel was refitted to *Enterprise* - class, if ever.

The timing also dictates which Starfleet uniform is in use. It might be the old series' vintage velour shirts in red, blue or gold (nice), the pastel pajamas of the first movie (gross), or the maroon tunics used in the rest of the movies (sharp!). There are different models of phasers, communicators, and tricorders. Even environmental suits range from the old series' laughable space suits to the much better ones used in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*.

Of course, relations with *Star Trek's* favorite race of villains, the Klingons, change slightly. It varies from the Klingons saying "I'll kill you now!" to "I'll kill you if the Organians are not looking!" to "I'll maim you now and kill you later; give me Genesis!" The lifting of the Organian Treaty becomes a very crucial point in history, enabling unrestrained ship battles among the major powers.

The only consequence of starting your campaign in the early years of the saga is that the PCs will grow old. By the time your campaign reaches the date of the fourth movie, your group will be ready to play "Geriatrics in Space." If the PCs begin at a relatively young age, this effect will not be too bad, but it also means that their

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initial influence on the ship will be less. Limiting the number of tours in the PCs' histories will give the campaign a younger though less-experienced crew.

### Choosing your ship

Ship selection is something that the GM and players can enjoy together. Naturally, the size of the group should affect the size of the ship. An Enterprise-class cruiser needs more department heads than does a Nelson-class scout ship.

Personally, I recommend an *Enterprise* class vessel. Not only is it a recognizable ship to even the most casual player, it is also a versatile ship that will not blow up the first time it is fired upon. Once again, the *Federation Ship Recognition Manual* is a must. It gives a full list of *Constitution-* and *Enterprise-class* vessels including hull numbers, refit dates, and special notes. The manual also addresses the *Reliant*-class research cruiser, which is another good choice for a campaign vessel. Truly nasty GMs can assign a vessel that is fated to be destroyed or scrapped at a certain date, and then create an adventure when this happens! If such a dastardly type of GM exists, it is hoped that he would be kind enough to give the PCs a fighting chance to survive, as well as ensure that the PCs do not read about their own fates beforehand.

The disadvantage of a large ship be-

comes painfully obvious to any GM whose mind is one step ahead of his players. A ship of such tremendous power needs some challenging assignments.

If your players are of the hack-and-slash variety, you could always assign them a Military Operations Command vessel such as a *Loknar* - class frigate or a Larson-class destroyer. Ships of these two classes are also listed in the *Federation Ship Recognition Manual* by hull number and name, and are all excellent ships.

Please do not initially assign the PCs something like an Excelsior-class battleship! This is the equivalent of an AD&D® game's DM assigning his players + 5 armor, weapons, and rings at 1st level, or like a TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game's Administrator assigning his rookie agents Uzis, M16s, and ultra high-tech helicopters.

### Reviewing the crew

The next step is to get a crew assembled. The STAR TREK game requires a command hierarchy of a Captain, First Officer, and Department Heads. There is no need to elect a party leader as in other games. The Captain is the leader, and everyone had better darn well listen to him or else consign themselves to an unglamorous fate of serving on an ore freighter.

This structure makes the Captain and First Officer the most crucial persons on the ship. The rules in the STAR TREK

game recommend that the GM select the two people for those positions, and this is a sound idea. But whom do you choose?

Some say that the best leaders are those who do not actively seek to lead. Good leaders do not chase after positions of power and glory, and they are the ones you want for command duties. The GM needs to select two people who are good at making decisions and giving orders without ego tripping. They need to elicit trust from the other PCs and be able to trust them to do their own jobs. The leaders should be team players who inspire cooperation and not chaos.

Think about the implications of commanding an *Enterprise* - class vessel. This ship has enough firepower to devastate a planet. It contains over 400 NPCs and 6-12 PCs. One wrong decision and all those people, including the PCs that the players took years to develop, become space dust. That is a big responsibility. Leaders must first be servants, and the lesson is as relevant in gaming as it is in real life. The commanders must put their personal interests behind those of their crew and the ship. The best leader is not a tin-plated, swaggering dictator with delusions of godhood.

Choosing the First Officer is just as important as choosing the Captain. Remember, if the Captain is disabled, the First Officer assumes command. The perfect

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First Officer does not interfere with his Captain's duty. Rather, he supports his commanding officer, giving advice when asked. A good First Officer also acts as a liaison to the crew, intercepting and solving minor problems while the Captain remains free to face bigger crises, such as five million tribbles in the food processors or the Klingon task force bearing down on the ship. As a rule, the First Officer has the conn if the Captain is off the bridge, and sometimes the First Officer is asked to lead a landing party. In the true Mr. Spock tradition, you can assign a department head the additional responsibility. If you have few players, this is sound strategy. Security, Engineering, or Medical department heads are not good choices for double duty, however.

After these two difficult positions are assigned, let the rest of the players divide up the departments. Each department is unique, and certain personality types seem to be better suited for certain departments. The nonviolent types may enjoy Chief Medical or Chief Communications Officer. The law-and-order or the hack-and-slash player would be perfect for Security Chief, though we all know what happens to Security personnel ("Ensign Slob, check behind that rock." "Yes, sir!" ZAP! AAGH! GROWF! POOF! "Poor Slob!").

Players who enjoy using their brains may go for Science or Engineering, while the players who like blowing things up or zooming around space at ludicrous speed will love Chief Helm. Finally, there is that position voted Most Boring by my campaigners: Chief Navigator. At best, this poor person gets to raise deflector shields during battle. Most of the time, however, the Chief Navigator says "Course laid in, Captain," then sits back. Give this position to either the most rabid Trekkie in your group who loves to play so much that he will take anything, or to someone who doesn't care what job he holds.

Be aware that Helm, Navigation, and Science supply many future command personnel, so keep your eyes on those people. They may be worth promoting.

Though the old series did not show it much, there were nonhuman crew members on the U.S.S. *Enterprise* other than Mr. Spock. Budget constraints on makeup dictated what sorts of aliens we saw. Fortunately, role-playing games are limited only by imagination. Let players choose their own races, but temper their choices with common sense. There are advantages to playing nonhumans, usually in the form of attribute modifiers. The disadvantage should be that the player must act in the manner proper to that race, and some of the races are downright bizarre.

The player whose PC weeps uncontrollably at the drop of a hat (or helm) would make a terrible Vulcan. The player whose PC is always mellow and laid back is a poor choice for a stubborn Tellarite. The Chief Medical Officer should be the same race as the majority of the crew. A Vulcan

should rarely be Chief Helm, since helmsmen fire the ship's weapons and Vulcans dislike violence. Vulcans are also not party animals, greedy, power hungry, or rowdy (and they flirt only once every seven years).

Only a fool would choose a Tellarite for Chief Communications Officer ("This is Commander Taubarrgjjh of the U.S.S. *Valiant* – speak, Klingon slime!") or place an Andorian in a position that may involve hot temperatures such as an engineering area. Deltans are lovers, not fighters, and consequently would be flops as Security Chiefs (but would make good doctors). Efrosians make excellent doctors, and their warrior background means that the good doctor may justifiably get involved in a good melee or two. Andorians are a good choice for the warrior-type player, but even this race attempts to be as unemotional as the Vulcans. When they do get riled up, watch out!

The STAR TREK game's character-generation system is excellent because it provides the player with a PC who is already an experienced officer rather than a raw recruit. The GM may give each PC a score of 10 in his respective planet's Culture/History skill but not count it against the PC's amount of pre-Academy skills. Any civilized planet would give its children instruction in basic culture and history whether the child wants it or not. If the planet has a particularly hostile environment, the GM is also justified in

awarding a bonus of 10 in the appropriate Planetary Survival score.

Very few role-playing games show the need for teamwork as much as the STAR TREK game. Everyone must work together to accomplish a goal. Reward the players when they work together, and discourage "lone wolf" tactics where one PC goes off to do something stupid. Such a PC should be considered phaser fodder.

### A cast of thousands

As mentioned earlier, the red-shirted security personnel in the old *Star Trek* series were notorious for their short life spans. Inevitably, they would be stabbed, disrupted, poisoned, dropped from great heights, changed into Styrofoam polyhedrons, or burned to death by an angry Horta. Even nonsecurity personnel got their share of death and maiming. After the GM establishes his crew, the next wise move is to create a set of NPCs to not only support the PCs but to present themselves as great targets. STAR TREK NPC crewmen are great victims for those villains who cry, "I shall give you an example of my power, puny mortals!"

Ideally, a PC in the STAR TREK game should have a long lifespan, probably the longest of any RPG. In the old series, the main characters never died. In the game, the PCs are the main characters. This does not mean that there should never be any possibility of PC death, but rather that it should be approached carefully. A game



without risk is no fun, but the risk should be well considered. If your players deserve it, give them a "back door" to get out of the situation. Stupid actions deserve harsh consequences, while smart actions should be a good reason to spare PC lives.

Back to the NPC creation. If your campaign is centered on any good-size vessel, you have several hundred NPCs to consider. You should not create stats for all of them, but you could allow one or two assistants for each PC. Starships operate around the clock, so crew are needed to man various stations in the PC's absence. Create personnel to crew helm, navigation, communication, science, and engineering stations during the off shifts.

Give these NPCs some fleshing out! Assign them a Trivia or Gaming score. Give them some critical skills that few players chose for their PCs during generation. This is a good chance to throw in a few of your favorite races. Go ahead, give them a Vulcan science officer, a Zaranite engineer specializing in Starship Weaponry Tech, an Arkenite marine biologist, or an Efrosian navigator! My campaign's favorite NPCs include an Andorian chief nurse, a small telepathic worm, and a human communications assistant with such a loud, gregarious personality that he nearly blows out the audio circuits!

In addition, flesh out the commander of the nearest starbase, a few Starfleet Command officers, and a few ship captains from other Starfleet vessels. You need not repeat the old series' tendency to have most of Captain Kirk's friends dying or going insane. Give your NPCs some staying power. A rival officer may cause some problems, and a persistent Orion family may have a grudge against the ship. You can even create a Klingon or Romulan vessel that pops up wherever the PCs and their vessel are, threatening to throw a spanner into their plans.

#### **Your five-year mission. . . .**

After assembling all of this information, it is time to decide what sort of missions to put the players through. First, let's tackle the FASA modules.

As mentioned before, the STAR TREK game modules are not best suited for a continuous campaign using the same ship and PCs. There are, however, several notable exceptions. Bear in mind that the following modules require adaptation.

*Where Has All the Glory Gone?, Denial of Destiny, Demand of Honor, and The Strider Incident* are all good for adapting to an ongoing campaign. You can make the changes without turning the product into something unrecognizable. The latter two modules are also very well written.

The *Dixie Gambit, Decision at Midnight, A Conflict of Interests, and The Mines of Selka* are all good modules but have very limited use in a campaign. It is still possible to use them, but a GM needs to do heavy tinkering or alter the PCs' circumstances. If the PC's vessel is undergoing a refit or

repair, these adventures are good fillers.

*Return to Axanar* and *Old Soldiers Never Die* are dubious at best but are recommended for the wonderful sourcebooks they provide. *Return to Axanar* is a very long adventure requiring several sessions and is unfortunately very linear, taking the PCs from one encounter to the next regardless of their actions.

Since the release of *The Strider Incident* (a terrific adventure that also includes deck plans for the Regula I research station, a good investment), there have been no new STAR TREK modules. Thus, it falls on the GM's shoulders to come up with an excellent campaign.

General Order Number One—the Prime Directive—is the most powerful restraint available to the enterprising (no pun intended) GM. It is frustrating to the players to know that they run a vessel that could destroy a star system, yet they cannot unleash this power on the penny-ante barbarian village that has a couple of the ship's officers as hostages. When the GM creates an adventure, the Prime Directive must always be kept in mind. Violating it could mean discharge from the service, imprisonment, or (in extreme cases) death. The Prime Directive becomes a special burden during exploration missions.

*Star Trek* is about galactic exploration.

While blasting Klingons or outwitting Orions can be fun, the spirit of the series—and consequently the game—is exploration and discovery. You can have a ship battle in every game, but remember that the various spacefaring powers have a finite number of ships. Try not to let every session degenerate into a high-tech slugfest.

The finest exploration missions are the first contacts, those missions during which a new race is discovered and the PCs must deal with strange and sometimes hilarious differences in cultures. The best way to approach this is to create a new race, not necessarily humanoid. Then, throw out all customs known to the players and reinvent them, mixing them up well. One culture I created shrugged their shoulders to say "yes." Another race may greet newcomers by striking them to test their patience. Another may require that all males remain silent and let the women do the talking, while another race may laugh when sad or spit when happy.

Imagine running into a totally alien vessel. Your vessel hails it, but it fires a beam of charged photons back at you, crippling your ship. Later, you find out that it was merely sending back a friendly message. The use of physics and technology can vary from race to race. Not all extraterrestrials breathe oxygen or come



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from carbon-based life. Some races may be totally blind, have no nervous systems, or be genderless.

Confuse the players! An ugly race may fight a handsome race, with the ugly race being the good guys. Trap the players with their own preconceived notions. A race of blind quadriplegics may be powerful telepaths. A handsome, Adonis-like people may be deathly afraid of tiny wounds.

A hilarious example of this occurred when the U.S.S. *Valiant* made first contact with a race called the Igresh, who were horrendously ugly and smelled ten times worse than they looked. Contact teams met to talk, and the Igresh offered the crew a favorite Igresh drink that refreshed the body. One brave soul, Chief Navigator Nat Zar, drank it for the sake of galactic friendship. Suddenly, every gland, duct, and organ that produced any sort of fluid began operating at an accelerated rate. The liquid was cleaning out all impurities from his system. The poor fellow was in terrible straits, much to the horror of his ship mates and to the innocent delight of the Igresh. Commander Zar survived and, after changing his uniform, was in perfect shape.

During the old television series, money was saved by using old props from movies. The U.S.S. *Enterprise* ran into cultures that resembled different terrestrial historical periods. Ancient Rome, Nazi Germany,

the Roaring 20s, and American Indians were all represented in the series. Though the GM does not have to worry about budget problems, no campaign would be complete without running into a dozen different human races placed on various planets by the Preservers. Imagine running into cultures descended from the Vikings, feudal Japan, ancient Egypt, 17th-century America, the Incas, or even an exact counterpart of Earth, complete with World War II raging. If the players know what's good for them, they'll remember the Prime Directive and not attempt to tamper. Alternate histories could provide a nice twist—but what about a civilization where the Nazis won World War II? Would it be considered tampering to try to do something about that?

The restraints imposed on the crew by Starfleet Command should present the players with ethical dilemmas. A planet with technology similar to 1988 Earth is about to launch a thermonuclear war. Should you stop it? How about a planet where one race is enslaved to another?

To make matters tougher, throw in some unprincipled Klingons. The Klingons and the PCs might both try to get a planet to join their sides. A classic scenario to be sure, but it can hold enough variation to make each encounter exciting. Avoid predictability. In the previously mentioned Igresh contact, the Klingons were involved

in local politics, as were two other new races. At one point, the crew of the U.S.S. *Valiant* and some Klingons had to team up for survival!

Starfleet officers should consider violence only as a last resort, fighting only when there is no other alternative. To some gamers, this is boring, because it reduces the "action." But the spirit of *Star Trek* is the challenge of exploring the unknown. The enemy may be a hostile virus that the PCs must learn to cure, or an abnormality in space that traps vessels and warps time. There should be action—firing phasers and photons, or landing parties fighting with Klingons—but this shouldn't be commonplace.

Above all, try to maintain continuity with the series and movies. Starfleet does not send out vessels to blow up Klingon outposts, and Vulcans do not advocate war with the Orions. Certainly, you can set up bizarre situations like a dozen Spacedocks, vessels that travel at Warp 16, and plaid Romulans, but the campaign rapidly loses its *Star Trek* flavor. The GM becomes obligated to outdo himself until the crew saves the universe every gaming session and the game becomes an unrecognizable mutation of the original product.

If you have unruly PCs, Starfleet Command does an admirable job of keeping the crew in place. When crew members start breaking laws, court-martials can

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remedy this. Does the Captain pretty much do what he pleases? One Board of Inquiry later, the First Officer may be in command while the ex-Captain mines borite. Sure, Captain Kirk got away with a lot, but Kirk is also a Starfleet legend, and the fourth movie showed that even a legend can be put on trial.

Another great tactic is to have a stable PC play Chief Medical Officer, and if he sees the Captain behaving erratically, have the Captain declared incompetent. Of course, the GM could always kill a PC, but that is hardly sporting. Infecting him with a horribly contagious disease for the duration of the adventure may be a good warning, though.

Just how dangerous should an adventure be? Obviously, you don't want to pit your PCs' Nelson-class scout against a Klingon L-24 battleship, but a mission to Deneb to deliver some flowers to a Delta ambassador seems a bit tame. Find the middle ground. An element of the unusual can throw the players off guard and make for a rewarding session. The aforementioned mission to deliver flowers is quite boring, but what if the flowers were sentient, 9' tall, and telepathic? Furthermore, what if another race in the Federation wanted the flowers badly enough that it tried to steal them?

Each adventure should have an element of risk or it ceases to be fun. Present the problem clearly, and throw in some twists to the plot. Provide more than one solution, but make the crew work to find them. Should a PC's life be threatened, give him a Luck roll; only if the roll is failed does the PC die. Even in fatal situations, make sure the threat is logical. A squad of Klingon marines is not going to overlook the Starfleet security men in battle armor in favor of killing the wimpy communications officer 45 meters from the melee!

NPC crew should generally be the first targets in a firefight. If there are more enemy NPCs than friendly NPCs, then the PCs, too, should be counted as legitimate targets. Players who try to hide behind the NPCs may be charged with conduct unbecoming to officers and should be zapped on principle. A Klingon may bypass an NPC as a target if the PC is more of a threat. In short, treat combat situations with fairness and logic.

Inevitably, a PC may die. Any self-respecting player will accept such a fate if there was at least a fighting chance to avoid it. There should rarely be *Kobayashi Maru* scenarios in the game—don't stack the deck so that the PCs cannot win or escape.

If you really need ideas, here are the two most off-the-wall gaming suggestions that I have ever created. The first one has been used; the other will not be used as long as my players behave.

First, imagine finding an Earthlike planet where the Preservers have placed a group of humans whose technology level is simi-

lar to 11th century Britain. The Preservers performed gene-splicing experiments and created beasts that were half man and half horse, as well as winged horses, eagle-headed winged lions, etc. They also genetically created short humans with lots of facial hair and a talent for mining, and another human type with slim build, fair hair, and a 90% resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells. Sound familiar?

Second, imagine having the PCs find a planet where a certain bloated, octopoid-headed, insane deity and his flying fungus friends reside. Your players will go insane over this one.

### How to hassle heroes

If an adventure involves conflict with another starfaring race, there are certain rules of thumb that should be followed, depending on which race is encountered; these helpful generalizations follow. Bear in mind that just because someone is a Klingon, his behavior is not completely predictable. To automatically assume that a Romulan will be honorable or that a Klingon will be violent is a deadly mistake. Encourage the players to regard each NPC individually rather than to make assumptions based on race. In fact, this is not a bad philosophy for real life, and there have been many instances when *Star Trek* episodes told a story with a moral.

First, guidelines on Klingons. As seen in the old series and in the movies, Klingons are indeed a brutal, violent race. But please bear in mind that they are not stupid! No race achieves warp capability and an empire by being morons. Klingons are honorable, but usually only to fellow Klingons or, at the very best, to people who are clearly brave warriors.

There are rivalries between different Klingon family lines, but such conflicts are put aside when the families are faced with a common threat. There have even been incidents where Klingons and humans have cooperated. As the Klingons say: "Only a fool fights in a burning house."

As a rule, Klingon vessels travel in groups of three. If the Klingons are in orbit around a planet before PCs arrive,

two vessels will be on the opposite side of the planet, in a "sensor shadow." The PCs will only detect one vessel, while the other two lurk behind, waiting for the moment to strike. Remember, Klingons love negotiating from a position of strength!

The Romulans are a different case altogether. They are a proud, honorable people who seem to have more integrity than the Klingons do. They fight not because they wish to, but because of the necessity for them to expand. Their systems are poor in resources, and they need to survive. With Romulans, conflict is less personal. Nevertheless, they are tough, violent opponents who would rather die than surrender. They might even be described as noble. Their use of the cloaking device is a bit less noble, but to the Romulans it does the job. Romulans are the perfect race to use for a secret incursion into Federation space. Their tactics have more finesse than those of the Klingons. Few things are more disturbing than having three Romulan Stormbirds materialize with weapons charged around the campaign vessel.

Orions are accomplished merchants, pirates, rogues, entrepreneurs, and troublemakers. They walk a fine line between the UFP and the Klingons. They are materialists but, again, are not stupid. In fact, they are downright devious. If any opponent should be allowed to escape to fight another day, it should be the Orions. Then there are those green Orion women. . . .

The Gorn are big, lizardlike brutes who hiss a lot and look very mean (with good reason, since they *are* mean). Gorn are divided into clans, and currently some clans are in rebellion against the Gorn Alliance. Some of the rebellion is due to the Gorn stance on the UFP. The rebels favor war and the Alliance favors negotiation. Therefore, the possibility of running into rebel Gorn vessels always exists. Gorn also have a code of honor, since they are a warrior race, but they lack finesse and subtlety. Their tactics are blunt and involve much violence, as witnessed in the *Star Trek* episode, "The Arena." Their engineering theory seems to be "If it's

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stuck, push it. If it fails to move, get a bigger hammer. If it breaks, it needed to be fixed anyway." Like the Klingons, they are by no means idiots, or they would not have developed warp drive.

As for homemade races, the limits are those of your own imagination. Make sure that there are logical reasons for certain behavior or standards. For example, a race that is recovering from a technologically inspired global war may harbor a strong hatred toward technology and those who use it.

When designing adventures, remember that the PCs have great resources at their disposal. A nemesis can't sneak up on a group that always carries tricorders. A transporter breakdown still leaves shuttlecraft. Medicine is so advanced that even somebody who has a current operational endurance of -45 can still pull through if a Federation-style sick bay is handy. The computers on a starship contain more information than the Library of Congress and are at the PCs' fingertips. Some farsighted parties equip themselves with subcutaneous transponders so the ship can always find them.

Avoid using the same plot devices for limiting the PCs options. How many ion storms can "just happen" to be in the area, rendering transporters inoperative? How many lifeforms are so radically different that they do not show up on sensors? Know your players and how they think. Look for weaknesses, and play those weaknesses against the group. Learn what buttons to push with specific players. Do you have a player with an inflated ego? Have an NPC push him around. Does another player get nervous around Klingons? Bring 'em on! Players who are terrified of command should find themselves suddenly left in command because of unusual circumstances.

## Engineering department

No, this has nothing to do with playing Mr. Scott. There are certain rules-related odds and ends that need addressing before you start a STAR TREK campaign.

First, there are Action Points, or APs. According to the rules, the GM is supposed to track each PC's APs, since there's often the chance the PC can perform certain actions during another PC's turn. Such actions are called opportunity *actions*.

I advise you to throw out most of the AP system. Have you ever tried to keep track of a dozen Klingon Marines and a dozen PCs in a melee? There's far too much accounting involved. Instead, make everything more abstract. Let the PC or NPC with the highest Small Unit Tactics score go first, as per the rules. Discard the opportunity actions, but allow PCs to do extra things that may be logical. Let each combatant have one (and only one) chance to attack each turn. Logic should dictate what someone can or cannot do, but it

would be wise to keep the AP charts around as a guideline and a final arbiter.

The thing I find most irritating about the STAR TREK game rules is the lack of explanation for how long certain skills take to implement. Here's how we do it: When a skill roll is needed, say in Warp Drive Technology, the roll is made. This represents a "quick fix," a la Mr. Scott. Should the roll succeed, all is well. If it fails, then the PC can try again, but the results will not be certain for 2d10 minutes.

The same principle follows for looking up information or treating someone's wounds. When looking up information, roll the average of the PC's scores in Computer Operations and the respective subject.. If Commander Markell is looking up all incidences of Starfleet starship disappearances in Federation history, his Computer Operations and Federation Culture/History would be averaged to find the chance for him to locate the right entry in a timely fashion.

The rules for using a tricorder seem a bit vague. In one instance, the rules tell you to use Computer Operations; but tricorders are also referred to under Small Equipment Systems Operation. I suggest averaging the above two scores with the skill in the subject with which the PC is concerned. Thus, if Commander Decataur is scanning some ancient ruins, he would roll the average of his Computer Operations, Small Equipment Systems Operations, and Archaeology. Remember, the tricorder or sensor records information accurately. The player is rolling for his PC's ability to *understand* what is being recorded.

Some game systems that use skills have outstanding successes and critical failures. This, too, is an excellent idea. If the PC makes his roll by less than 5% of the skill, make it an outstanding success. If Commander Decataur's Warp Drive Technology skill is 80 and he rolls a 3, not only did he get the port warp engine working, he also coaxed two extra power units out of it for an hour. On the other hand, if the PC rolls 96-00, something terrible has happened. The degree of trouble escalates with the higher rolls. If someone has a skill of 99 and he rolls 00, he has failed and must roll again, this time with a -20 penalty. If he passes, there are no repercussions. If he fails again, it is a critical failure. The actions needed to correct a roll like this could be an adventure unto itself!

Finally, have you ever tried to resolve a 3-D chess game? Nowhere do the rules cover this. We've ad-libbed a nice little system where both opponents must roll lower than the average of their intelligences and their skill ratings, with the winner being the first one who makes it. If both make it, the winner is the person who rolled proportionately lower. If Dr. Voris, who has a score of 40, rolls 10, and Captain Anastas, who has a score of 20, rolls 8, Dr. Voris would win because 10 is 25% of 40, while 8 is 40% of 20, a consid-

erably higher proportion. If someone rolls a critical failure at 3-D chess, feel free to ignore the consequences. After all, how can losing the game be deadly, unless the PC gets a pawn lodged up his nose by an angry loser? Now, if the PC is playing zero-gee lacrosse, a critical failure could mean a broken arm or a concussion. Incidentally, for resolving a sports contest, average the PC's skill and his dexterity. For resolving card games, average the game skill with his luck score.

## Miscellany

The STAR TREK game is not limited to a Starfleet-based campaign. There are sourcebooks for playing merchants and traders, or Starfleet Intelligence agents. Other sourcebooks are available that can allow a Klingon, Romulan, or Orion campaign. A Klingon campaign is definitely not like running a chaotic-evil or all-orc campaign in the AD&D® game! It seems to be a mixture of FASA's STAR TREK, West End Games' PARANOIA®, and TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I. game.

Be careful not to allow your STAR TREK campaign to lose its unique flavor so that the scenarios you design could be mistaken for something involving different RPGs (i.e., "generic module blandness"). Use STAR TREK terminology and historical references, and above all, keep the spirit of exploring strange new worlds and seeking out new life and new civilizations alive. Many episodes were morality plays. While these may be hard to incorporate in the game, simple lessons like "violence is not always necessary," "machines cannot and must not replace man," and "don't judge by outward appearances" can be woven into scenarios.

Finally, avoid repetition. Just how many corrupt Starfleet Admirals are running around? How many times can the existence of the entire galaxy be threatened, only to be saved by the same group of heroes time and time again? Keep your players guessing as to what sort of adventure is coming next. Will it be a delicate diplomatic mission or an undercover assignment? Adventures could even happen during shore leave, when the players least expect it. "Where no one has gone before" leaves a lot of territory to cover.

This article is dedicated to the following people, who stump me at every turn so that I have to come up with better and trickier adventures: Sophia Biedel, Beth Bigelow, Kim Calabrese, Joel and Judd Emery, Jamie Hale, Kevin McBride, Milton McGorrill, John Rennie, Nick Rowe, Anthony Scappichio, Ellen Terra, Bryan Vil larreal, Kevin Wells, Colleen and Dave Wetzel, and Bow Worsham. Live long and prosper! Ω

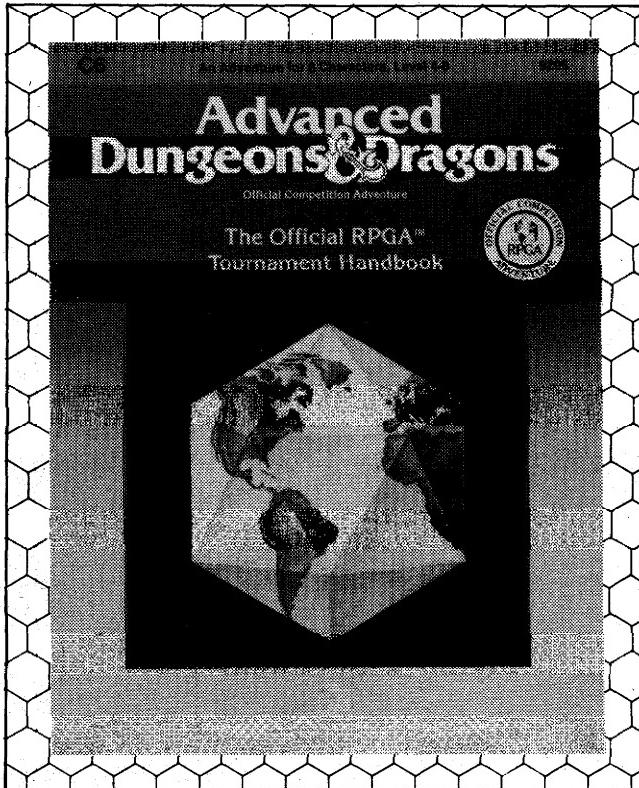
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# Unspeakable Secrets Made Easy

Building your unspeakable library in  
Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® game

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Sometime in the course of a campaign, CALL OF CTHULHU® game Keepers will find a need for new, exciting Mythos tomes. This article has some thoughts on how to create new tomes to surprise Investigators, with examples drawn from Mythos stories, the CALL OF CTHULHU

rules, and my own campaign.

The first and most important rule is to *not* make a random-number system for generating Mythos tomes. One of the CALL OF CTHULHU game's strengths is its emphasis on storytelling over complicated rules and numbers. No formulas or tables

will appear here, except for a summary of some sample tomes. No table or formula can do what the imaginative Keeper can when creating tomes that are memorable and integrated into the campaign.

Avoiding duplication is essential; in fact, it is at the heart of most of the suggestions that follow. These texts are supposed to be rare and exotic. Too much similarity among them tarnishes their mystique. For instance, there are already several massive compilations of "dark and baleful mythos, of liturgies, rituals, and incantations both evil and esoteric" like the *Book of Eibon*. A description of this book supplies the preceding quote, and the *Revelations of Glaaki* and the *Necronomicon* also fall into this category. There are also titles that are essentially collected descriptions of sinister cults; *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* and *Cultes des Goules* spring to mind. One new book of each type could be rationalized on the grounds of novelty, but more would be excessive. After all, if a tome is going to be just like *Kulten* or *Eibon*, why not just use the original?

The more perceptive Mythos writers seem to have kept this in mind. In the CALL OF CTHULHU rules, *Eibon* and *De Vermiis Mysteriis* seem much the same. Their knowledge ratings, spell multipliers, and sanity losses are nearly equal. *Vermiis* is in Latin; so is one version of *Eibon*. If you read the stories in which they appear,



Illustration by Valerie Valusek

you find that both tomes were written by powerful sorcerers. One wizard, however, lived and wrote in medieval Europe, while the other lived millennia before in Hyperborea. Maybe these books aren't alike after all.

This illustrates one characteristic of a good Mythos tome: a sinister origin and history. Lovecraft went so far as to write an essay on the "History and Chronology of the *Necronomicon*," but you need not go to such lengths. In stories, Lovecraft and his compatriots settled for a paragraph or two on each book, which is enough. If the players want to know more about a book's history, it's easy to make up further details as needed. Of course, a good tome origin can also be used as a hook to draw Investigators into new adventures.

Your own Mythos books aren't the only ones that can benefit from added history and detail. Many of the works listed in the CALL OF CTHULHU rulebook have never, to the best of my knowledge, been given any history or description by Mythos authors. The *Book of Dzyan*, *Eldown Shards*, and others aren't much more than names. You can add as many details to them as you want.

One way that new tomes can differ from existing ones is in their origin. Approximately half the books listed in the CALL OF CTHULHU rules are of Western origin. The Middle East, India, and China have extensive written occult traditions; it seems logical that they would have Cthulhu Mythos writings. The Mythos activities of other regions could see print through visitors from literate areas. Drop a hint to your players that Sanskrit may be as useful to them as Latin.

Books are just one way of storing information. Although books dominate post-Classical Western cultures, there are also scrolls, tablets, wall inscriptions, and monuments. Smaller amounts of information—single spells or monster descriptions—might be revealed in tapestries, paintings, inscribed amulets, or even less likely objects. Modern-setting campaigns can add various kinds of audio and visual recordings, microformats, and computer files. Even if a "text" isn't encountered in its original book format, this can spice up its history and origin.

It's a good idea to check whether a format is appropriate for the tome's original culture. The Mesopotamian cultures, for instance, wrote on baked clay tablets, whereas the Egyptians used scrolls in addition to covering their monuments, temples, and tombs with carved or painted inscriptions. This research will probably give you lots of ideas for adventures, too.

Another useful trick is to tie a tome's origin to some preexisting bit of history or legend, whether real or Mythos. Every bit of verisimilitude helps in building atmosphere, and the surprise of recognition gives players the feeling of investigating a real mystery. On the other hand, such references may be in-jokes, as when Love-

craft interjected a straight-faced reference to the "Commoriom myth-cycle preserved by the Atlantean high priest Klarkash-Ton." (Commoriom was an ancient city prominently featured in stories by Lovecraft's friend Clark Ashton Smith.) In-jokes can be fun even if they don't contribute to your carefully crafted atmosphere of paranoia and horror.

The next step is deciding if the tome focuses on any particular part of the Mythos. Not only does a focused subject make a tome feel more like a real book instead of an ad-hoc plot device, it gives you a guide to selecting spells for the work. A tome could focus on the Great Old Ones or Outer Gods, entities of air and space dwellers underground, gods that appeal to lone sorcerers, gods served by frenzied cultists, or whatever other corner of the Mythos seems appropriate for the tome's origin and the adventure in which it will be encountered. The *R'lyeh Text*, for instance, obviously focuses on Cthulhu and related beings. It or any similar guide to oceanic powers probably will not emanate from cultists in the arid heart of Asia.

Conversely, if the purpose of a tome is to introduce a particular spell to the Investigators, the tome's origin and subject focus should be shaped with this in mind.

Another aspect of tome content is the relative proportion of lore to spells. Some works clearly emphasize lore. As a guide to Mythos cults, there is no reason why *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* should have many spells. In my campaign, the *Kulten* can teach spells because of numerous luridly detailed descriptions of cult rituals rather than by any intent of its author. Other texts, in contrast, are meant to be spellbooks. Robert Bloch's story, "The Shambler from the Star," makes it quite clear that *De Vermis Mysteriis* is a grimoire loaded with summonings and other dire magic formulae. *True Magick* sounds like a less imposing grimoire. Some tomes might provide lore and magic more or less equally; The *Book of Eibon*, as mentioned above, contains both "rituals and incantations" and "dark and baleful myths."

The last stage of tome invention, and in many ways the least important, is assigning the tome's knowledge rating, spell multiplier, and sanity loss. The list of tomes in the CALL OF CTHULHU rulebook

shows that only the most important Mythos books like *Kulten* and *Vermis* get a knowledge rating of 12%-15%, while very minor lorebooks and grimoires like *People of the Monolith* and the *Zanthu Tablets* get ratings of 5% or less. Anything in between is a matter of the Keeper's taste. The maximum possible sanity loss is usually closely tied to the knowledge rating. For example, the *Celaeno Fragments* gets a knowledge rating of 9%, and can cause up to 8 points SAN loss. The major connection between knowledge rating and sanity loss is the level of danger posed by the tome's information. *Monstres and Their Kynde* and *The Golden Bough* both have a knowledge rating of 5%, for example, but *Monstres* causes 1d6 SAN loss, while *Bough* only does 1d2. *Bough*, however, deals with the Cthulhu Mythos only indirectly and accidentally through its analysis of ancient European myths and customs. Besides, *The Golden Bough* is a real book that has probably never driven a reader insane. In general, unless a tome is meant to be a major sanity-buster like *Vermis* or *Kulten*, 1d4 or 2d4 is a good rating for sanity losses from tome reading. Either roll has a 50% chance of forcing a check for temporary insanity but isn't likely to cause indefinite insanity.

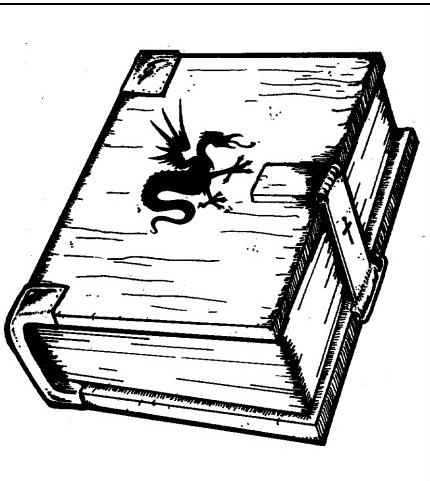
Spell multipliers show how comparatively easy or hard it is to learn spells from a Mythos text. The most common multiplier is x 2; it gives Investigators a fair chance to learn a few spells without making it easy to learn any spell in particular. Second most common are the multipliers x 1 and x 3; x 4 and x 5 are appropriately rare, reserved for the *Necronomicon* and those few texts approaching it in virulence. Of course, minor lorebooks completely lacking spells have no spell multiplier. Aside from these broad categories, there is no intrinsic relation between a book's spell multiplier and its knowledge rating or SAN loss, or between the book's spell multipliers and whether that book is a grimoire for learning spells or not. As mentioned above in relation to *Kulten*, a lorebook author might clearly describe how to cast a spell even if he didn't consciously intend to; on the other hand, a sorcerer explaining a spell might cloak his instructions in obscure symbolism. Minor texts might present their few spells in a

### The Golden Goblin Mythos Library

Title	Language	Knowledge rating	Spell multiplier	SAN Loss
<i>Book of Elder Aeons</i>	English **	+ 10%	x 1	2d4
<i>El Codigo de Uxmal</i>	Spanish **	+8%	x 2	1d8
<i>The Uxmal Codex*</i>	English	+6%	x 2	1d8
<i>Demon Gods of Mu</i>	English	+6%	x 1	1d6
<i>Magic and Mystery of Mu</i>	English	+5%	x 3	1d6
<i>Mu: Lost Land of the Pacific</i>	English	+3%	-	1d3

\* Translation of *El Codigo de Uxmal*.

\*\* Work is chiefly available in this language but not originally in that tongue.



relatively straightforward manner, while a major tome could scatter spell instructions throughout pages of irrelevant information or outright nonsense. It depends on the Keeper's concept of the tome and the context of the adventure. If the adventure hinges on the Investigators learning Call Ithaqua, the text providing it should have a high spell multiplier. (This assumes you disapprove of fudging dice rolls to advance the plot.)

Mythos tome creation is not a systematic process. You probably will start at any of the above points and take the rest in any order as inspiration leads you. The only rule in tome creation that should be considered ironclad is that no tome has statistics surpassing or even equalling the *Necronomicon*.

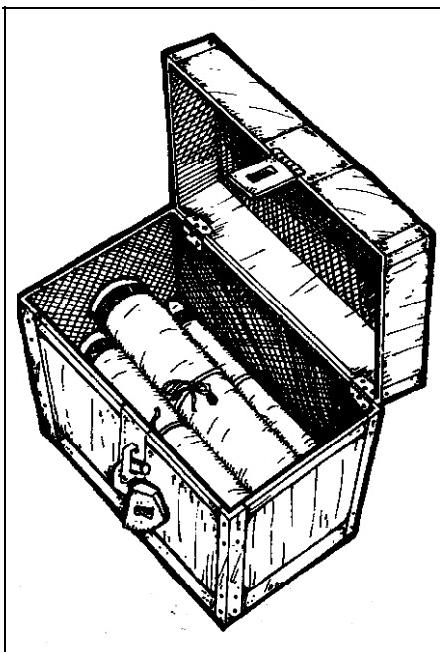
Since an example is worth a dozen rules, here is a selection of Mythos books from Golden Goblin Press, occult publishers extraordinaire in the CALL OF CTHULHU game world.

When the real worlds James Churchward began writing books of dubious scholarship about the lost continent of Mu, he didn't know that Golden Goblin's star researcher, Paul Dixon, had already written three books on the subject. The first was *Mu: Lost Land of the Pacific* (1896), in which Dixon marshalled a wide range of evidence for that ancient land's existence, from folklore to zoology. While no reputable scholar ever accepted Dixon's claims, a few might privately admit that Mu is both more plausible and more disturbing than other works of the "lost continent" school. Some of Dixon's revelations are quite sinister, especially those about Muvian religion, giving *Mu* a 3% knowledge rating and 1d3 SAN loss. It has no spells and is a typical, very minor lorebook.

In 1900, Dixon wrote a sequel: *Demon Gods of Mu*. Any hint of respect the academic community may have felt for Dixon vanished with this work, which was widely denounced as lurid, sensationalistic, and totally lacking in serious scholarship. In it, Dixon not only claimed that the gods of Mu were real, but he asserted that they still existed and were worshipped. His reliance on bizarre occult texts like

*The Ponape Scripture* and the *Necronomicon* offended scholars as much as his wild claim to have been "inspired" by Cthulhu, Shub-Niggurath, and other Muvian gods. His descriptions of Muvian rituals were as grotesque as they were detailed. Some of the rituals actually worked, a point Dixon's detractors missed. *Demon Gods of Mu* is a slightly more important lorebook, with + 6% knowledge, spell multiplier of x 1, and 1d6 SAN loss. It contains four spells: Contact Cthulhu, Summon Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, Contact Nyarlathotep, and Activate Eidolon (see "The Ghastly Grimoire," DRAGON Magazine issue #126, for details of this spell). If you want to use this or any other of these tomes in your campaign, you can give them any spells you deem necessary.

Dixon's final work was *Magic and Mystery of Mu* (1902). This minor grimoire describes Muvian sorcery; the preface



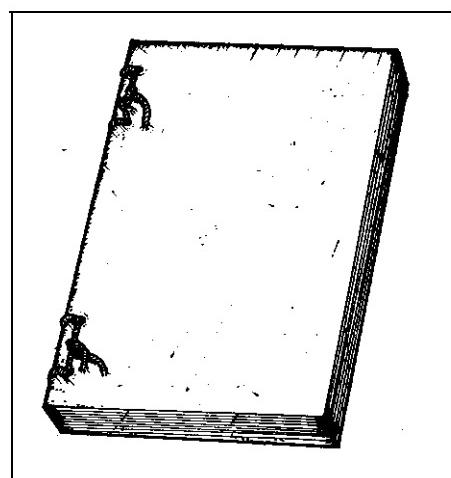
claims that it really works. (This is not true: half the spells are defective and won't work, as a Cthulhu Mythos roll will show in each case.) Dixon admitted that *Magic* only contained minor Muvian spells, but he promised to someday produce a more complete guide to Muvian wizardry. He never did. He disappeared in 1903 during an expedition to Nan Madol and was never seen again. *Magic* was, by the way, the worst seller of Dixon's books, probably because his "Muvian sorcery" bore no resemblance to what he called "the puerile fantasies of popular occultism." It has a +5% knowledge, spell multiplier of x 3, and causes 1d6 SAN loss. It contains Elder Sign, Enchant Brazier, Conjure Glass of Mortland, Enchant Blade, Chant of Thoth, Dread Curse of Azathoth, and Contact Lloigor.

In addition to its massively expurgated 1909 edition of *Nameless Cults*, Golden Goblin published one other major lorebook: the *Book of Elder Aeons* (1906), a

translation of a scroll found in the ruins of a heretical Tibetan lamasery. It purports to tell the history of the races that came before humanity on Earth. It uses the terms and mythological patterns of B'on, the animistic religion which preceded and heavily influenced Tibetan Buddhism.

*Elder Aeons'* cycles of race following race, mysteriously linked in some way to Earth's position among the stars, forms a pattern familiar to Theosophists. Indeed, the similarities to Theosophy are deliberately emphasized by translator Muriel Rasmussen. She argues in her introduction that *Elder Aeons* confirms Theosophy, although the book itself is partly in error. Muriel Rasmussen is still alive in campaigns set in the 1920s, but she will not help Investigators in any way. In 1911, she renounced Theosophy, burned her copy of the *Book of Elder Aeons*, and entered a convent where she lives under a vow of silence. The *Book of Elder Aeons* has these statistics: + 10% knowledge, spell multiplier of x 1, and 2d4 SAN loss. Its six spells all deal with contacting various Elder Races. The original scroll is held by the British Museum.

Golden Goblin tried hard to produce books that went beyond the usual occult tripe. They tried too hard, some people said. A final example is its last publication, a Mayan grimoire found in the ruins of the city of Uxmal. In 1901, Dr. Miguel Arrocas of the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in Mexico City produced a translation based on notes in Spanish written above a few lines of Mayan text. Most archeologists and linguists think that the *The Uxmal Codex* is a magnificently detailed hoax to which Dr. Arrocas succumbed. If genuine, this collection of rituals and incantations supposedly compiled by an ancient Mayan sorcerer-priest would revolutionize theories about Mayan magic and religion. (For hints about the *Codex*'s frightening revelations, see "The Cthulhu Mythos in Mesoamerican Religion" in Chaosium's *Cthulhu Companion*.) Subsequently, the Spanish *El Codigo de Uxmal* was translated into English by Thad Chevaux, a Miskatonic University graduate, and published



Illustrations by David Zenz

by Golden Goblin in 1910.

Not surprisingly, Chevaux's translation is not as complete or accurate a source of Mythos information as Arrocas's text. The concepts of Mythos are especially difficult to translate, so errors tend to multiply. In practice, this means that the Golden Goblin edition of the *The Uxmal Codex* gives +6% knowledge, while the Spanish version gives +8%. Both have a spell multiplier of x2 and cause 1d8 SAN loss. The Spanish version contains Contact Yig, Summon Child of Yig, Contact Deep One, Contact Cthulhu, Contact Nyarlathotep, Summon Hunting Horror, Bind Hunting Horror, Dread Curse of Azathoth, Hands of Yig, Enchant Knife, and Summon Fire Vampire. The English version deletes Contact Cthulhu, Contact Nyarlathotep, and Bind Hunting Horror.

Following Dr. Arrocas's suicide in 1908, the original folded tree-bark edition of *The Uxmal Codex* has been kept in a temperature and humidity controlled vault by the Museo. Chevaux died shortly after the *Codex's* publication, in the fire that consumed Golden Goblin's office, editor, and supply of unsold volumes. No one knows why Chevaux and the editor were alone at the office in the middle of the night, or the unidentifiable bones found in addition to their charred remains.

I hope these examples will inspire you to think up your own new Mythos tomes for your campaign or create ways to add spice to the tomes listed in the CALL OF CTHULHU rulebook. Lovecraft himself encouraged his friends to make their own contributions to the Mythos and its grim bibliography; Mythos writers like Clark Ashton Smith, August Derleth, and Robert Bloch have given Keepers ample precedent. So get out there and knock 'em dead!

Er, that's just a figure of speech.

Ω

## Computers

Continued from page 73

sageways. Have plenty of healing herbs.

8. The Pirate's Lair contains a sapphire coin and a jeweled crown.

9. You will eventually have to fight in the castle. When you have a lot of firebolts, go to a section of the castle, wipe out the guards, and open the chests.

10. The Temptress will offer you either Charm or Gold.

11. You must have four magic seeds to succeed on the second level. More magic seeds are found in the same place after you use the ones you have.

12. After you solve each dungeon, your strength will increase.

13. The turquoise coin is found on the second dungeon level.

14. Use the guardian exhibit to open the door across from the Spiral room.

15. The "distant healer" is in Eagle's Hollow. He will give you a ruby coin.

16. After you have the four guard

jewels, return to Eagle Hollow to be healed and to buy herbs. Magic does not work well in the fortress, so don't buy any!

17. Use healing herbs to free yourself from the spell's grip.

18. At the end of the game, after you return the scrolls, you get your own display. This was a nice reward for completing the game.

Scott Whittaker  
Lighthouse Point FL

### *Phantasie I* (SSI)

[*Hints courtesy of SSI's product newsletter*, Inside SSI.]

As you know, there are nine rings that must be found. Here are their locations: find two in the Temple of the Dosnebian Clerics; one in Phantasie's Armory; three in J. R. Troldkin's Castle; and three in Bleeb's Dungeon. To win this adventure, you must slay the Dark Lord and obtain the Divine Spell.

### *Phantasie II* (SSI)

[*Hints courtesy of SSIS product newsletter*, Inside SSI.]

You'll have to find the beasts in this game; beasts 1 and 2 are in the Material Plane and can show up anywhere, so be careful. While on the Material Plane, check out the desert island: you'll find Beasts 3 and 4 there. Beasts 5 and 6 are on the Astral Plane and can be summoned through use of spell #57. Pluto's Castle is the home of Beast 7 and in Pluto's Manegarie, yep, heeeeere's Beast 8.

### *Phantasie III* (SSI)

[*Hints courtesy of SSI's product newsletter*, Inside SSI.]

You eventually need to get to the Plane of Light. To accomplish this, while in the spirals of the Crystal Castle of Chronos, type "C2+" and pull the lever, then get out of the dungeon. You must possess the Key of Light in order to get into the castle.

In order to get to the Dark Plane, follow the same instructions as above, except type in "C2-" then leave the dungeon.

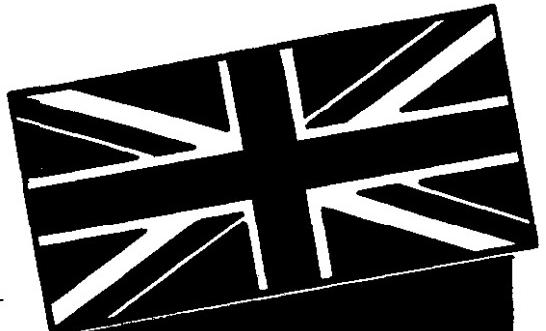
### *Star Command* (SSI)

[*Hints courtesy of SSI's product newsletter*, Inside SSI.]

The Princess Viselda is in one of the three black holes. The coordinates for each black hole are: 10,29; 28,14; 23,06.

You must enter each black hole and down scan' on every planet of each star in the black hole. The password found inside the Insect Missile Factory is THPI.

Coming next month: The Beastie Awards! Plus, new reviews and more news regarding new product announcements. Don't forget to send in your game hints. Mail them to us at 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583. While you help others, perhaps others will help you. Until next month, game on!



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# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short, succinct, and under 150 words long.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to either Anne Brown or Roger E. Moore at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

❖ indicates an Australian convention.

✖ indicates a Canadian convention.

● indicates a European convention.

\* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. The use of the name of any product without mention of its trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

## COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 15 October 6-8

Hosted by the Schenectady Wargamers Association, this convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Schenectady, N.Y. A number of RPGA™ Network events are planned, including a Master's Level AD&D® tournament. There will also be several other AD&D® tournaments and single-round events. Other events will include BATTLETECH®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CIVILIZATION®, DIPLOMACY® (Youngstown lo-player variant), CHAMPIONS®, CAR WARS®, RUNEQUEST®, and various other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. The convention will also feature a miniatures-painting contest and games auction. Advance registration will be \$10 for the weekend, or \$15 at the door. For a preregistration booklet, send an SASE to: Eric Paperman, Con Director, 418 Vliet Blvd., Cohoes NY 12047. Room rates for this event are \$60 a night for double occupancy and \$75 a night for quad. For information about lodging, contact the Schenectady Ramada Inn at: (518) 370-7151.

## DRAGON CON '89, October 6-8

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the OMNI International Hotel and Convention Center in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Anne McCaffrey, Wes Craven, Michael Whelan, Andrew Greenberg, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, Gary Gygax, Richard Garriott, Robert Asprin, Lynn Abbey, and Larry Elmore. Preregistration (through September 15) is \$30. Fantasy role-playing, strategic, miniatures, and computer gaming will be featured in over 100 tournaments. Other events will include four tracks of workshops and panels, masquerade shows, an art show and print shop, video rooms, art and consignment auctions, a con suite, and more. Send an SASE to: DRAGON CON '89, Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362. You may also purchase your advanced membership by VISA or MasterCard by calling Tevex, toll-free, at: (800) 456-1162.

## SUNCOAST SKIRMISHES '89, October 6-8

SKIRMISHES presents the ninth-annual presentation of this gaming extravaganza. This event will take place at the Holiday Inn-Ashley Plaza, 111 West Fortune Street in Tampa, Fla. Room rates are \$50 for one to four people. Events will include: AD&D®, TRAVELLER®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CAR WARS®, Napoleonics miniatures, SEEKRIEG®, and other games; board gaming; a KILLER® tournament; and dealers. Registration is \$18 for the weekend; send your fees to receive a program booklet. Write to: SKIRMISHES, P.O. Box 2097, Winter

Haven FL 33883; or call: (813) 293-7983.

## TITANCON/TNT III, October 6-8

The Historical Simulation Society of Charlottesville, team winner of Titan National Tournament II, is hosting TNT III in Cabell Hall at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Va. Teams and individuals are invited to compete with the best U.S. TITAN\* game players in a round-robin, no-elimination event for team and individual trophies. Registration is \$3. Write to: Derek Craxton/HSS, 1711 Galloway Dr., Charlottesville VA 22901; or call: (804) 296-4897.

## TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION 7 October 7-8

The seventh-annual edition of Northwest Ohio's largest gaming convention will be held at the University of Toledo's Scott Park Campus. This year we will have over 140 events, including: role-playing, strategy, tactical, board, and miniatures tournaments; two auctions; demonstrations; painting contests; and dealers and exhibitors. Featured this year are AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, GURPS®, STAR WARS®, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER®, AXIS & ALIES®, and SPACE: 1889® events. In addition, there will be nonstop movies and open gaming. Send an SASE to: TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION 7, c/o Mind Games, 3001 North Reynolds Road, Toledo OH 43615.

## QUAD CON, October 13-15

The RiverBend Gamers Association will sponsor QUAD CON '89 at Palmer Auditorium, 1000 Brady St., Davenport, Iowa. Special room rates are available at the Best Western Riverview Inn by calling (800) 528-1234 toll free or (319) 324-1921. Games include AD&D®, D&D®, BATTLETECH®, RECON®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CAR WARS®, STAR TREK®, GURPS®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, GAMMA WORLD®, TRAVELLER 2300®, TWILIGHT 2000®, TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES®, MERP®, DR. WHO®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, DC HEROES®, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER®, CIVILIZATION®, DIPLOMACY®, and AIR SORTIE® games. Other events will include microarmor, a painting contest, a multievent ancients-to-future combat tournament, and a costume contest (no weapons, please). At-the-door fees are: \$10 for the weekend, \$5 per day. Send a #10 SASE to: RiverBend Gamer's Association, P.O. Box 8421, Moline IL 61265.

## NECRONOMICON '89, October 20-22

NECRONOMICON '89, a science-fiction, fantasy, and horror convention, will be held at the Ashley Plaza Holiday Inn in Tampa, Fla. Guests of honor will be George Alec Effinger (author of *When Gravity Fails*) and artist Tom Kidd. Other guests include Richard Byers (author of *Fright Line*) and Richard Louis Newman (author of *On Wings of Evil*). Membership rates are \$15 until September 15, and \$20 at the door. One-day memberships are available at the door only.

Hotel room rates are \$50 for single to quad occupancy. Activities will include author and artist panels, a fan cabaret, a masquerade, a Batman 50th Anniversary Trivia Quiz, autograph sessions, an art auction, a late night dance, and an Ygor party. Write to: NECRONOMICON '89, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or call: (813) 677-6347.

#### NOTJUSTANOTHER CON, October 20-22

The Science Fiction Conventioneers of U. Mass. (SCUM) will hold its fifth NOTJUST-ANOTHER CON in the Campus Center of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Guest of honor is Oscar-winning filmmaker Mike Jittlov (*The Wizard of Speed and Time*). Membership rates are \$13 through October 1; \$15 from October 1-19; and \$17 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCUM, RSO 104 SAO, U. Mass., Amherst MA 01003; or call: (413) 545-1924.

#### QUEEN CITY GAMES '89, October 20-21

QUEEN CITY GAMES '89 will be held at the Cincinnati Technical College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Events will include BATTLETECH\*, STAR FLEET BATTLES\*, and microarmor games, with an RPGA™ Network tournament, role-playing, miniatures, door prizes, seminars, and a costume contest. Write to: Cincinnati Adventure Gamers, Q.C.G. '89, P.O. Box 462, Cincinnati OH 45201; or call: (513) 542-3449, 1:30-6:00 P.M.

#### CONFIGURATION, October 21-22

CONFIGURATION will be held in the Student Union and Post Hall of Rogers State College, College Hill, Will Rogers Blvd., Claremore, Okla., minutes northeast of Tulsa. Tournaments include D&D®, AD&D®, MERP\*, WARHAMMER\*, WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE\*, SPACE OPERA\*, TWILIGHT 2000\*, and other games. Prizes will be awarded in each tournament. There will be a large dealers' room, open gaming, artists, and guests. Admission is \$5 in advance, or \$7 at the door. One-day admission prices are \$4 per day, or \$1 for a dealers' room pass. Write to: CONFIGURATION, 107 E. 7th St., Owasso OK 74055; or call: (918) 272-4171.

#### HEXACON '89, October 27-29

This science-fiction and fantasy gaming convention will be held at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in the Bryan Business and Economics building. Tournaments include the AD&D® game (sponsored by the RPGA™ Network), and BATTLETECH\*, CAR WARS\*, and other games. Dealers will be present. Preregistration is \$10 general admission for the weekend, \$7 for students with valid ID, and \$5 for UNCG students. Write to: Robin Jordan, Science Fiction and Fantasy Federation, Box 4 EUC, UNCG, Greensboro NC 27412; or call: (919) 334-3159.

#### MILEHICON 21, October 27-29

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Executive Tower Inn in Denver, Colo. Robert Bloch will be the guest of honor; Forrest J. Ackerman will be fan guest of honor; and Simon Hawke will be toastmaster. Events will include: literary and scientific panels; an art show and auction; exhibits; a Critter Crunch; videos and movies; filk programming; a gaming area; a costume contest; and a masked ball. Room rates are \$47 for single or double occupancy; \$52 for triple or quad occupancy. Dealers' tables are \$40 until October 27. Registration fees are \$20 until October 15, or \$22 at the door. Write to: MILEHICON, P.O. Box 27074, Lakewood CO 80227; or call: (303) 426-0806.

#### WARGAMER'S EXPO, October 27-29

This event has been cancelled.

#### COMMAND.CON 1, October 28

This convention will be held at the Forest Park Community College campus cafeteria. Events will include RPGA™ Network AD&D® games, miniatures battles, and a game auction. Admission is \$5. Write to: COMMAND.CON 1, P.O. Box 9107, Richmond Heights MO 63117; or call: (314) 727-1508 or (314) 721-1155 before 10:00 P.M. No collect calls, please.

#### ADVENTURE '89, October 28-29 \*

Canada's Premier Gaming Convention is to be held in Mississauga, Ontario, at the University of Toronto's Erindale Campus, 3359 Mississauga Rd. Guests include Lloyd Blankenship from Steve Jackson Games, Kevin Barrett of I.C.E., and Bob Simpson of Supremacy Games. Events include AD&D® tournaments, and BATTLETECH\* and more than 20 other role-playing games, many sponsored by the RPGA™ Network. Also featured are over 25 board games, miniatures games, professional seminars, a game auction, and a costume contest. For hotel reservations, call Novotel at: (419) 896-1000 (mention ADVENTURE '89 for discount rates). Preregistration, in Canadian or U.S. funds, is \$15 for the weekend or \$9 per day. Registration at the door is \$20 for the weekend or \$12 per day. Send check or money order, or write to: ADVENTURE '89, 257 Queen St. South, Mississauga, Ontario, CANADA L5M 1L9. Include your phone number with all correspondence.

#### STARD '89, November 4-5

For the first time, STARD will be a two-day event, to be held at the Curio-Haus, Rothenbaumchaussee 13, on the Hamburg University campus. Events will include hundreds of role-playing, tabletop, and board game events, miniatures exhibitions and competitions, a game auction and art exhibition, workshops, panel discussion, demonstration games, and a dealers' area. Hours are Saturday, 10:00 to 22:00, and Sunday 10:00 to 18:00. Write to: Citadel Verlag, Mühlendamm 41-43, D-2000 Hamburg 76, WEST GERMANY, or call: 40-220 14 14 /5.

#### CONTRARY, November 10-11

CONTRARY '89 will be held at the Parwick Center in Chicopee, Mass. The convention will feature military/strategy games, role-playing games (including at least two RPGA™ Network events), and miniatures events. Preregistration is \$10 for both days or \$8 for one day. Write to: CONTRARY '89, 933 Belmont Ave., Springfield MA 01108; or call Mark at: (413) 731-7237.

#### AU GAMERS CONVENTION

November 10-12

The Au Gamers are proud to hold the largest fantasy role-playing convention in New Jersey at the Sheraton Tara Hotel, 199 Smith Rd., Parsippany NJ. Events will include RPGA™ Network tournaments, a charity game, a costume contest, a dealers' area, and a miniatures painting contest. Prizes will be awarded for best players and best gamemasters. For reservations, call: (201) 515-2000, ext. 5800. Mention the convention to receive special room rates. Registration fees before Oct. 20 are \$7 per day or \$18 for the weekend. After Oct. 20, rates are \$8 per day and \$20 for the weekend. Registration at the door will be \$10 per day. Write to: Steven M. Scheel, Oakwood Village, Bldg #26, Apt #9, Flanders NJ 07836, or call: (201) 927-8097; or John Moir, 361 Vandervier Ave., Sommerville NJ 08876; or call: (201) 725-1257.

#### SCI CON II, November 10-12

This science-fiction and gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. Artist guests of honor are Ron Lindahn and Val Lakey-Lindahn. Special guest is Frank Kelly Freas. Events will include panels, readings, video presentations, a costume contest, an art show, gaming, and more. Memberships are \$15 until September 30, or \$20 at the door. Huckster tables (which include one membership) are \$75 until October 1; any tables available after that point will be \$100. Send an SASE to: SCI CON 11, Dept. DR, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

#### ARMISTICE CON '89, November 11-12

This gaming event will be held at the Horizon Activities Center in North Olmsted, Ohio. Special events will include TRAVELLER\*, CAR WARS\*, BATTLETECH\*, DIPLOMACY\*, microarmor, and AD&D® game events, as well as Napoleonic miniatures, board and role-playing games, a miniatures exhibit, a miniatures-painting contest, and 24-hour gaming. Registration fees are \$12. One-day passes will be available for \$7. Write to: ARMISTICE CON '89, c/o Horizon Activities Center, 30395 Lorain Road, North Olmsted OH 44070; or call Dave Smith or Fran Haas at: (216) 779-6536 during business hours.

#### GAMESCON (UK) '89, November 11

This gaming convention will be held at the Laindon Community Centre, Basildon, Essex. Dungeon Masters and players are required for AD&D® competitions. Contact Chris Baylis at tel: 0268-419933, or write to: 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex SS11 5EG, UNITED KINGDOM.

#### PENTACON, November 11

The Northeast Indiana Gaming Association will be hosting the fifth annual PENTACON gaming convention in the Grand Wayne Convention Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. Games will include an RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournament, and BATTLETECH\*, CAR WARS\*, CHAMPIONS\*, CIVILIZATION\*, DARKUS THEL\*, MORROW PROJECT\*, and SPACE: 1889\* games. Other features are a painting contest and dealers' area. Send an SASE to: N.I.G.A., P.O. Box 11146, Fort Wayne IN 46856.

#### ROCK-CON XVI, November 11-12

Over 1,000 people are expected to attend this year's convention, to be held at the Rockford Lutheran High School, 3411 N. Alpine Rd., Rockford, Ill. Hours are Saturday, 10:00 A.M. to midnight; Sunday, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. A new event this year will be the painting competition, with numerous prizes. We expect over 15 major dealers. Admission is still only \$5 for the entire weekend, with no additional fee for gaming events. Send an SASE to: ROCK-CON XVI, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

#### UMF-CON, November 11-12

This role-playing and war-games convention will be held at the Student Center of the University of Maine in Farmington, Maine. Events will include TOP SECRET/S.I.™ and AD&D® games, DIPLOMACY\* competitions, miniatures, board games, and contests. Also planned is another murder mystery. Admission is \$5 per day and \$2 per game. Send an SASE to: Table Gaming Club, c/o Student Life Office, Student Center, 5 South Street, Farmington ME 04938.

#### NOVAG-V, November 17-19

The Northern Virginia Adventure Gamers will host their fifth annual convention at the Carra

doc Hall Inn in Leesburg, Va. All types of adventure games are included, from historical board and miniatures games to science-fiction and fantasy role-playing games. Vendors are welcome. Write to: Northern Virginia Adventure Gamers, c/o Wargamers Hobby Shop, 101 E. Holly Ave., Suite 16, Sterling VA 22170; or call: (703) 450-6738.

#### UCON '89, November 17-19

This role-playing and strategy gaming convention will take place in the Michigan Union at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Events will include: live role-playing; dealers' tables; a movie room; two AD&D® tournaments; and over 80 events including CIVILIZATION\*, STAR FLEET BATTLES\*, DIPLOMACY\*, THIRD REICH\*, and historical miniatures games. Game-masters receive free registration if preregistered. Write to: The Michigan Wargaming Club, P.O. Box 4491, Ann Arbor MI 48106.

#### UK Masters 1989 AD&D® Tournament November 11-12

This tournament will be held at the WAR '89 Convention at the Rivermead Leisure Center, Richfield Ave., Reading. Entry fee is £3.50 (£2.50 for players with UK ranking points). Make cheques payable and mail to: Mr. C. Froud, 88 Southview Ave., Reading, Berkshire, ENGLAND. Space is limited, so register early.

#### DALLAS FANTASY FAIR, November 24-26

Featuring over 140 dealers' tables, more than 60 guests, and over 2,000 attendees, this fantasy event will be held at the Marriott Park Central, 7750 I-635 at Coit Road in Dallas, Tex. Attractions will include two 24-hour video rooms, Japanimation, 24-hour gaming, four-track programming, a masquerade, an open con suite, an art show and auction, a charity auction, artists' and writers' workshops, autograph sessions, filksinging, dancing, an amateur-film festival, a talent show, and more. Admission is \$15 for all three days in advance, or \$20 at the door. Single-day admissions may be purchased at the door; prices are \$8 Friday, \$10 Saturday, and \$8 Sunday. Write to: Bulldog Productions, P.O. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; or call: (214) 349-3367.

#### MACQUARIECON '89, December 8-10

The Macquarie University Role-Playing Society will host Australia's largest role-playing convention at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Events will include AD&D®, PARANOIA\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, JAMES BOND\*, TRAVELLER\*, STAR WARS\*, MER.P.\*, WARHAMMER\*, SPACE: 1889\*, JUDGE DREDD\*, and board games and freeforms. Registration is \$30 (Australian) for the weekend or \$3 (Australian) per session with a \$7 registration fee. Write to: M.U.R.P.S., P.O. Box 1577, Macquarie Centre, North Ryde NSW 2113, AUSTRALIA.

#### TRITICON I, December 8-11

Students Tempted by Adventure, Fame, and Fortune (S.T.A.F.F.) will host their first convention at the Price Center on the University of California-San Diego campus. Events will include AD&D® tournaments; BATTLETECH\*, CAR WARS\*, and COSMIC ENCOUNTERS\* tournaments; DIPLOMACY\*, HOW TO HOST A MURDER\*, GAMMA WORLD\*, TRAVELLER\*, and WARHAMMER\* games, and a live dungeon. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Other events include open gaming, SCA demonstrations, a figure painting contest, a dealers' room, and a flea market. Registration is \$10(\$8 before December 1, \$12(\$10) at the door for the weekend, and \$5(\$4) each day at the door. UCSD

students receive the discounted rates in parentheses; include ID number when registering. Write to: TRITICON I, Price Center, E-30, UCSD, La Jolla CA 92093.

#### WINTER FANTASY, January 5-7, 1990

The RPGA™ Network will sponsor WINTER FANTASY 1990 at the Ramada Inn Airport at Milwaukee, Wis. Special room rates are available by contacting the hotel at (414) 764-5300. Sanctioned events include AD&D® Grand Masters, AD&D® Masters, AD&D® Feature, AD&D® Benefit, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, PARANOIA\*, and other tournaments. Other activities include a writers' seminar, Saturday morning breakfast, Sunday brunch, open gaming, and a dealers' area. All gaming is free except for the benefit tournament. Limited preregistration is available to RPGA Network members; contact Network HQ for a preregistration form. Registration fees are \$10 to Network members, \$12 to nonmembers until November 1. Afterward, fees for the entire weekend are \$15. Send a SASE to: RPGA™ Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

#### CHATTACON XV, January 12-14, 1990

CHATTACON XV will be held at The Chattanooga Choo-Choo, Chattanooga, Tenn. Accommodations are \$60 flat, \$85 for sleeper car suites. Guests will include Michael P. KubemcDowell, Robert E. Vardeman, David Cherry, Danny Gill, Wilson "Bob" Tucker, Stan Bruns, and Dick and Nicki Lynch. Registration: \$18 until Dec. 1, \$25 thereafter and at the door. Send an SASE to: CHATTACON XV, Box 23908, Chattanooga TN 37422; or call: (404) 591-9322 (no collect calls, please).

#### NEW MEXICON I, January 12-14

This science-fiction/science-fact con will be held at the Las Cruces Hilton Inn. In addition to gaming, featured are a variety of people from science and the arts to hold panel discussions and give demonstrations and lectures. Confirmed guests are G. Harry Stein as scientist guest of honor; Real Musgrave as artist guest of honor; James P. Hogan as author guest of honor; and Jim Davidson, Laurie Wiggins, Dr. Mike Hyson, and Greg Kennedy as scientist guests. Author guest speakers will be Walter John Williams, George Alex Effinger, Sonni Cooper, and James Theisen. Write to: NEW MEXICON I, Box 3836, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces NM 88003-3836; or call Lew Maestas evenings at: (505) 522-0115, or Gaylord Teague at: (505) 521-3828.

#### JACKSONVILLE SKIRMISHES '90 February 9-11, 1990

SKIRMISHES presents this role-playing and war gaming convention at the Jacksonville Motel on the Riverwalk, 565 South Main Street, in Jacksonville, Fla. Room rates are \$52 for one to four persons. Events will include AD&D® game features, along with TRAVELLER\*, STAR FLEET BATTLES\*, CAR WARS\*, and SEEKRIEG\* games. Other events will include board gaming, a KILLER\* tournament, dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, demonstrations by the SCA, and many other role-playing and historical events. Hotel reservations may be made by calling: (904) 398-8800. Registration is \$18 for the entire weekend. Send your registration fee to receive a program booklet. Write to: SKIRMISHES, P.O. Box 2097, Winter Haven FL 33883; or call: (813) 293-7983.

## Forum

### Continued from page 51

magical items. PCs in these games have some incredible stuff. I ask you, how many paladins below 7th level have holy swords in your campaign? In this campaign's case, roughly half.

It's getting worse, but the players enjoy it. When I started with this group, I tried to run games by the book. I rejected characters right and left for the above reasons and didn't use the variant systems. After a bit, I noticed a pattern. Some people would deliberately not come to games I ran, and no one would play a magic-user. I had to adapt to the gamers' playing styles, or I wouldn't be playing with them for long. I began using the variant spell systems and was more lenient with character selection.

I try to hold the line by myself. I retire my monster PCs soon after they become monsters, and I stick to book classes and races during character generation. I have a dream that this group will follow my example, but I'm not holding my breath.

All of you out there who have your ideas, use them if they fit your gaming style. If they don't, go back to the basics.

Bill McCullough  
Riverside CA

The "Forum," issue #146, contains several letters on subjects that I would like to address. I have been playing the AD&D game since 1982, and I have seen the long, slow transition from the original AD&D game to the amalgamation of the 12 or so hardcovers and finally to the new AD&D 2nd Edition (which I must say is GREAT!). I have also seen, the birth of the political/socioeconomic masterpieces that have become so popular lately. The point I would like to make is: WHO CARES?

First, the whole purpose of a game is to have fun. So what if a group wants to indulge in the detail and rules needed to run a direct-action-produces-results campaign or indulge in hour after hour of creating mindless monster-bashing adventures? I have run and played in both, and I enjoy *both*. What are people arguing over?

Second, I am also concerned about those who say that a bloodbath cannot be creative. In my estimation, *I6 Ravenloft* (by Tracy and Laura Hickman) is essentially a bloodbath that focuses on vampires, but it's a hard test of a player's skills and game knowledge. It is also the best module ever produced by TSR, Inc. I dare anyone to say it's not creative.

Third, what's the problem with having evil PCs? They are hard to play, true (what better test of skill?), but why can't they be in a party of predominately good characters? Raistlin sure wasn't good (even in the beginning, he acted like a neutral PC with evil tendencies). In *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, Laurana asked Raistlin why he followed Tanis. His reply was: "Because for now we walk the same path."

In closing, let me say this: I am a new waver (i.e., a punk rocker to some, although there is a difference), and I try to see people as *individuals* (that's why I consider myself chaotic neutral). If a group of players prefers building a kingdom to thrashing orcs and giants, so what? As long as we are the ones who make the AD&D game what it is and have fun doing it, nothing else matters, does it? So just sit back, relax, and let us all revel in our "infinite diversity" (to quote a certain Vulcan).

Anthony N. Emmel  
Longview TX

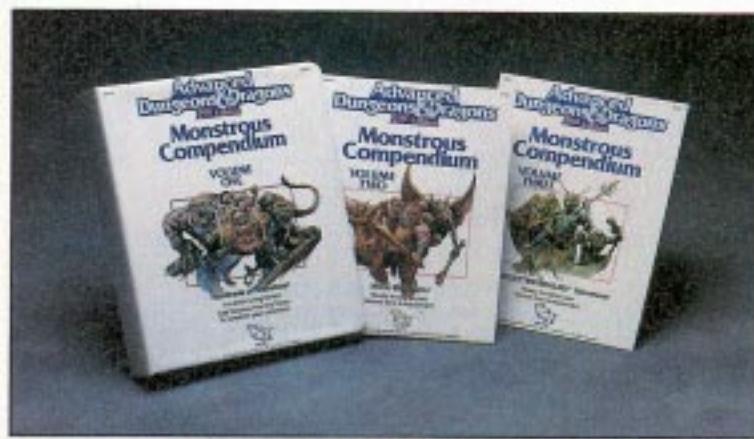
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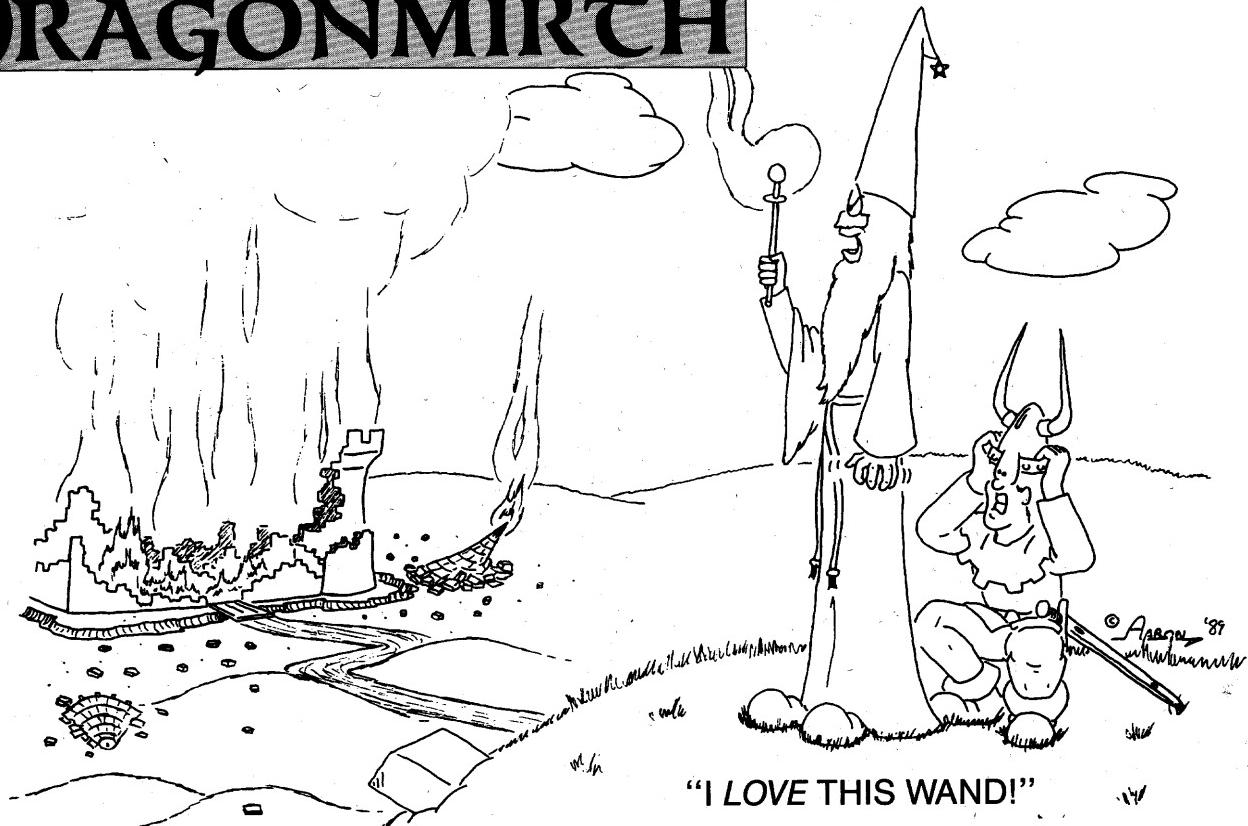
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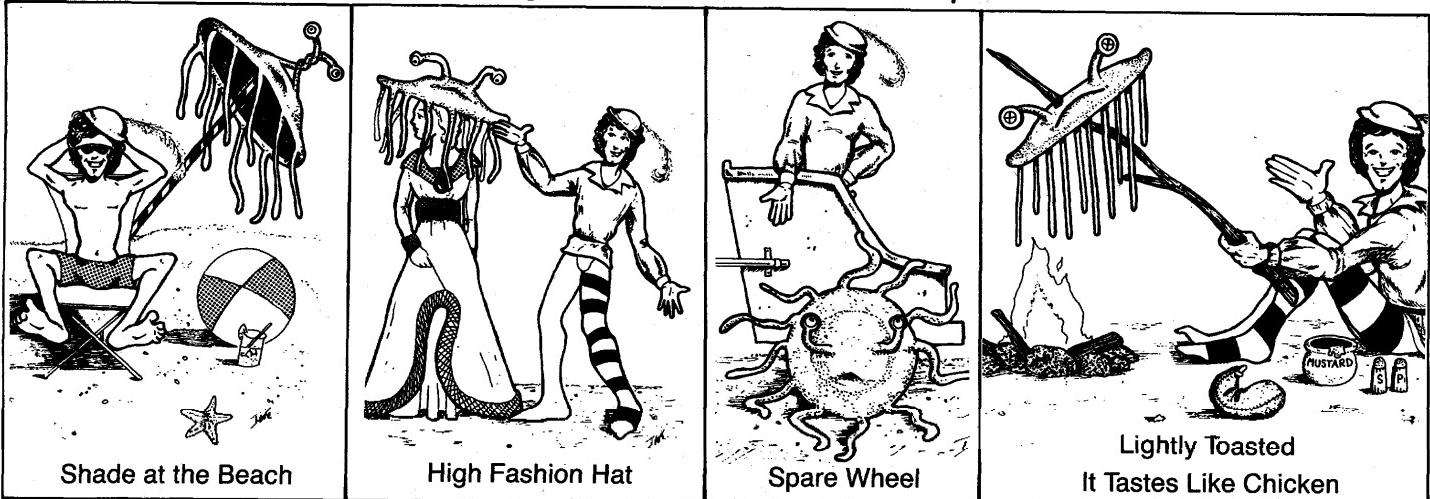


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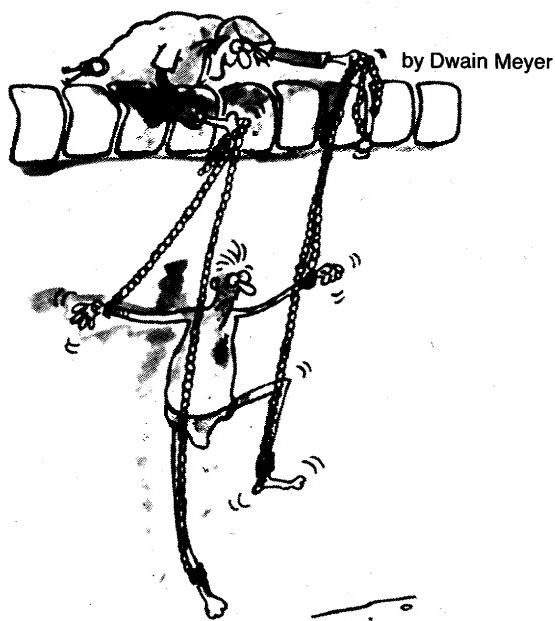


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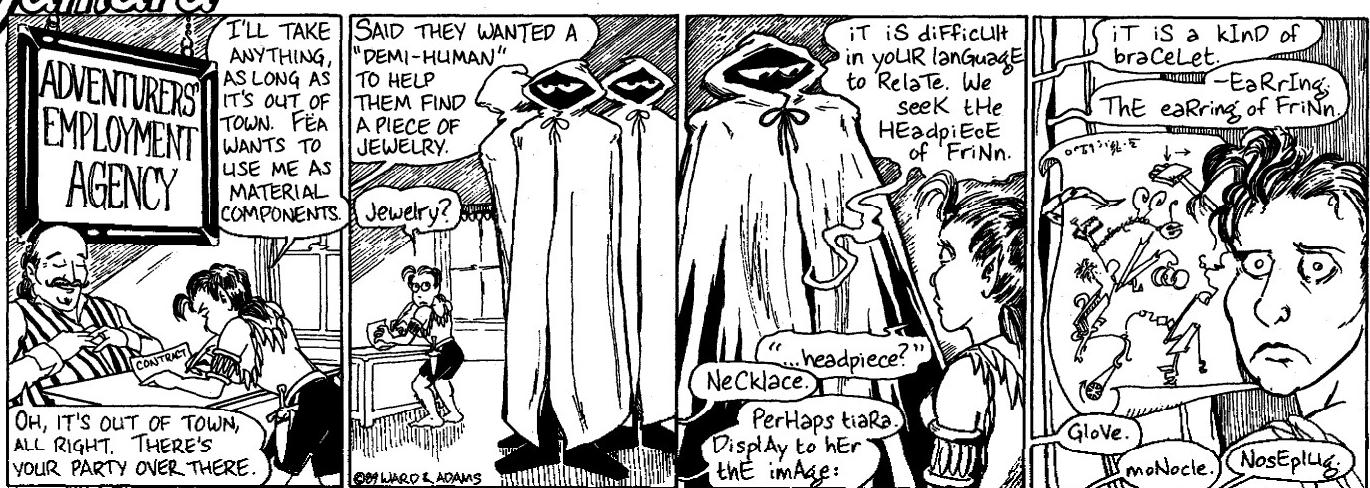


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LOLLY-POP . . .



"How come you never  
look at me like that?"

*Gammara*



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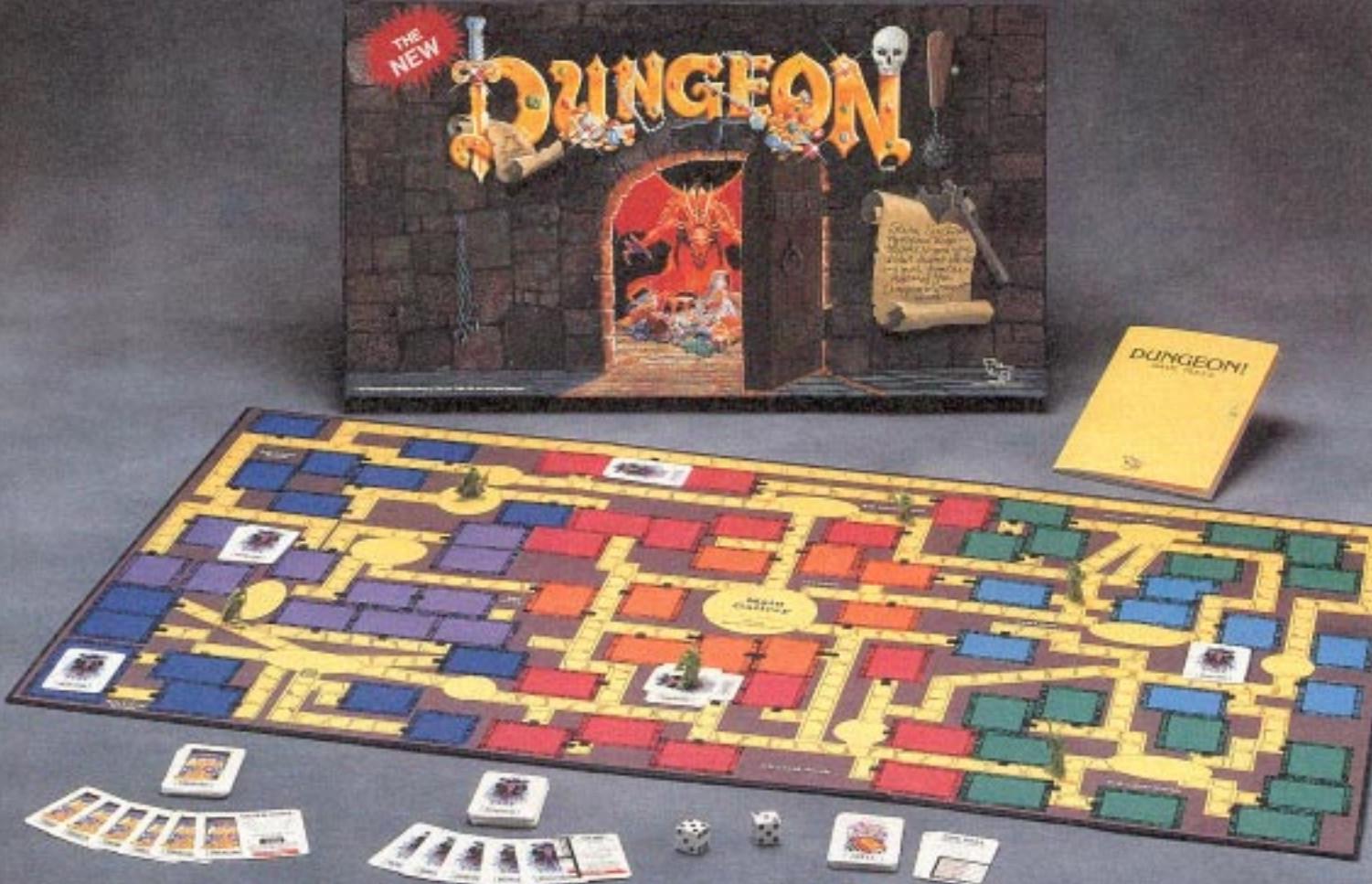
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